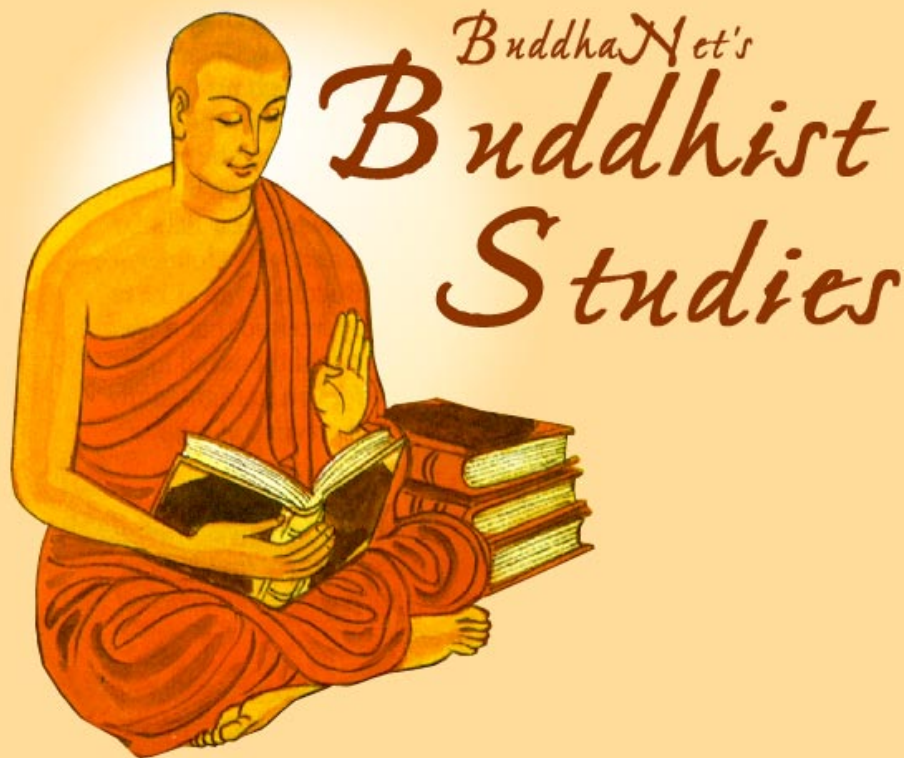


Buddhist Studies for Primary & Secondary Students

A Handbook for Teachers

[**PRINT VERSION ONLY**]

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For free distribution

Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the following people for their contribution towards the early stage of this project:
Mr Graeme Lyall, Venerable Kaset, Mr M.S. Perera and Venerable Chopel.

Finally, we thank Venerable Pannyavaro, George Balthazaar, G. Miller, Phil Thompson and Byron Winston for producing an electronic version of this project.

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa.

**Homage to the Blessed One, the Consummate One,
the Supremely Enlightened One.**

INTRODUCTION

Dear Buddhist Teachers,

Thank you for assisting the Buddhist Council of NSW with teaching the Dhamma/Dharma during Special Religious Education program periods in NSW state schools.

As we all know, the primary goal of Buddhist education is to fully realise the 4 Noble Truths.

Although all Buddhists strive to follow the Noble Eightfold Path, the ways of following it are numerous. Each individual's path is somewhat different from the others, but ultimately should lead to the same goal of enlightenment, through purity of mind and heart.

People all have different needs, cultural backgrounds and lifestyles; thus everyone will choose a way of practice which will be most suited to themselves. Regardless of which school of practice or method is chosen, they should all lead to the same outcome. Consequently, to be culturally sensitive to parents and students alike, the Buddhist Council of NSW and the Department of Schools Education request that we teach non-sectarian Buddhism in NSW state schools during the S.R.E. program.

Your respect and support of this method of teaching is requested and much appreciated.

Here are some guidelines and requirements, as set out by the Department of Education and the Buddhist Council of NSW, to help make teaching your classes more effective and run more smoothly:-

All Buddhist SRE teachers and their assistants teaching in NSW schools must have written authorisation from the Buddhist Council of NSW.

All Buddhist SRE teachers and their assistants must be willing to undergo a national screening/police check and sign a Declaration for Authorisation of Buddhist Teachers & Code of Conduct.

All Buddhist SRE teachers and their assistants will follow the outline of syllabus provided by the Buddhist Council of NSW. Personal Buddhist insights and experiences may be shared with the students. Any examples/materials which assist in helping students achieve a deeper and broader understanding of Buddhism are welcomed. SRE teachers are expected to teach Buddhism and remain as non-sectarian as possible.

All Buddhist SRE teachers and their assistants should encourage students' creativity and class discussion relating course framework to life experiences (ie. mudras, mandalas, newspaper or magazine clippings, etc., could be discussed, made or demonstrated, even though they are not in the syllabus).

Meditation techniques are restricted to Mindfulness of Breath (Anapanasati) and Loving-kindness (Metta Bhavana) Meditations. As the Buddhist Council of NSW has assumed responsibility for the safety and welfare of the children in its SRE programme, it is considered that impressionable young minds should not be subjected

to more advanced and/or suggestive forms of meditation teaching. Never leave students unsupervised while children are in your care.

Toileting - when a child must go to the toilet while in your class, have another child accompany them, children are to go in pairs, and advise them that they are to go together, directly to the toilet (quietly). And they should also return together.

Illness - when a child feels sick in your class, he/she should be sent to the school office and must be accompanied by two (2) other children, who are instructed to return to class together.

It is important to maintain a good relationship among SRE teachers at your designated school.

A positive relationship with the school is vital.

Preparation, punctuality, reliable attendance, respect for the school's policies and organisation all contribute towards establishing and maintaining strong co-operative relationship with the school.

Ongoing communication with the school's SRE Co-ordinator or other relevant staff members is beneficial.

Problems should be discussed with the Education Co-ordinator of the Buddhist Council of NSW. Alternatively, in relation to school matters/class room/ student's behaviour/student's attendance issues should all be discussed with the school's Principal for resolution.

A very special 'thank you' to Dana Murty for her wonderful effort in putting together the student workbooks and other study materials for Buddhist youth.

The Buddhist Council of NSW wishes to extend deep gratitude to every Buddhist SRE volunteer for dedicating their valuable time and energy to teaching the Dhamma / Dharma.

We all share many hopes and dreams of peace and harmony; and hope that one day all children in Australia and world-wide can benefit from the teachings of the Buddha.

Miranda Kuijpers
Education Co-ordinator
Buddhist Council of NSW

Sydney, April 2000



GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS

- 1. Aims**
- 2. Core Syllabus**
- 3. Method**
- 4. Materials**
- 5. Classes**
- 6. Questionnaires**

1. AIMS

i) To teach the life story of the Buddha and elementary Dhamma

To help children realise that the Buddha and Dhamma are truly unique, a precious gift to us, conducive to personal and collective peace and happiness.

To inspire (awaken) genuine interest in and enquiry into the Dhamma, not for ulterior motives, such as material objects or praise.

ii) To teach the Dhamma

To awaken, encourage and nourish, love of peace and truth (hence love of the Noble Eightfold Path), for their own sake and to live in a better (freer from suffering) world here and now and in the future.

iii) To teach about the Sangha and history of Buddhism

To help children understand the meaning of the Sangha and give them basic knowledge of the history of Buddhist tradition, and so deepen their insight into Buddhism.

2. CORE SYLLABUS

1.1 Introduction

What is Buddhism

Why to teach Buddhism

2.2 Buddha

Who is/was the Buddha

Historical record – the Buddha's life and teachings

2.3 Dhamma

What is the Dhamma

Facts of existence:

- Impermanence (*Anicca*)
- Not-self (*Anatta*)
- Suffering (*Dukkha*)
- Law of becoming (*Kamma*)

4 Noble Truths:

- Suffering
- Origin of suffering
- Cessation of suffering (*Nibbana*)
- Way to the cessation of suffering (Noble Eightfold Path)

Noble Eightfold Path:

- Right understanding
- Right thoughts
- Right speech
- Right actions
- Right livelihood
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right concentration

Brahma Viharas

- Loving kindness (*metta*)
- Compassion (*karuna*)
- Sympathetic joy (*mudita*)
- Equanimity (*upekkha*)

2.4 Sangha

What/who is the Sangha

4 Pairs of Noble Disciples

History of the Order:

- Origins
- During the Buddha's days
- Theravada
- Mahayana
- Modern

Festivals:

- Vesak, Dhammacakka, other
- Holy sites (Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Kusinara)

Architecture and art:

- Early
- Traditional
- Modern

3. METHOD

Essentially the teaching method should be similar to the Buddha's method – a gradual teaching method. It should be the same for older and younger children, however for the younger children one should use simpler words, and simpler contemplations and examples they can relate to. Students should be taught about the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha). Beginning with the life story of the Buddha, followed by his fundamental teachings (Dhamma) and history of the Buddhist tradition. To accomplish this, it is sufficient to use:

- A basic textbook containing the life story of the Buddha.
- Lessons containing the fundamental Dhamma and history of the Buddhist tradition, with contemplation exercises to understand the teaching and apply it in their daily lives.
- A collection of Buddha's discourses or adaptations of these for children, and ordinary examples or stories from daily life.

4. MATERIALS

4.1 Textbooks:

Gunapayuta, Lu Z.A. and Murty D., 2000. Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha for Children. This text is suitable for children age 6 to 12 years.

Gunapayuta, Hai J, Lu Z.A. and Lee Y.-F. 1998. A Pictorial Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha. The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, Taipei, Taiwan.

Gunapayuta, Lu Z.A. and Murty D., 2000. Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha.

These two texts are suitable for children 10 years old or older.

4.2 Workbooks:

A colouring book "Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha for Children - A Colouring Book", containing 93 line drawings, has been prepared for the youngest children.

A workbook "Buddhist Studies for Children", containing 14 lessons, has been prepared for the primary-level children (age 8 to 12 years). It contains an introductory material. The text is also suitable for children older than 12 years, if they are new to Buddhism.

A workbook "Buddhist Studies for Young Students", containing 28 lessons, has been prepared for the secondary-level children (age 12 to 18 years). It contains the fundamental Dhamma and expands on the material covered in the Buddhist Studies for Children. All teachers are encouraged to select lessons/material from it for an additional Dhamma instruction of the younger children.

All three workbooks are to be used in conjunction with the textbook(s) (see 4.1).

All this material is available for free distribution on the BuddhaNet:

(<http://www.buddhanet.net>).

4.3 Discourses from the Buddhist Scriptures

Selected discourses from “The Book of Protection” (by Venerable Piyadassi, 1981) are recommended to supplement the lessons material. This text was originally intended for novices, but at present it is the most well known Buddhist text in Sri Lanka. It contains 10 precepts and a collection of 24 discourses taken from the Nikayas and compiled by Mahatheras of Sri Lanka.

The discourses selected from The Book of Protection are beginner level discourses and appropriate for older children under a guidance by teachers. Even if students don't fully understand them, these discourses will give the children insight into the Buddhist scriptures. Especially the First Discourse, Analysis of the Truths and Discourse on Loving-kindness are fundamental. Jewel Discourse and Banner Protection will help them to understand the qualities of the Buddha and his students. Blessings Discourse will also help them to understand good qualities to develop.

Mahayanan discourses such as Lotus and Heart Sutras are too advanced for children. The Heart Sutra was not intended for beginners. Hence we feel that the simpler Theravada texts are much more suited as an introduction to the Buddhist scriptures, as at the introductory level the main purpose of the scripture study is to support the core teachings: life story of Buddha and 4 Noble Truths. The aim at this level is not to present students with a set of discourses representative of both traditions, irrespective of their ability to understand them.

Hence Mahayana discourses are not included in the core Buddhist studies for young students. However Mahayana texts and more advanced Theravada texts are suited as electives for those students who show deeper interest in the Dhamma and can be chosen and discussed during the free lessons as teachers feel appropriate.

4.4 References Texts:

Although there are many texts of varying length and depth on Buddhism, to gain a deeper understanding of Buddhism all teachers are encouraged to study the following short but comprehensive texts:

- Buddha, His Life and Teaching by Venerable Piyadassi, Wheel Publ. No. 5 A/B (available from BuddhaNet website).
- Buddhism in a Nutshell by Venerable Narada (available from Access to Insight and BuddhaNet websites).
- The Book of Protection (Paritta) by Venerable Piyadassi, 1981 (available from Access to Insight and BuddhaNet websites).

4.5 Audio Visual Resources

Audio visual resources can be used to support the lesson material. They are available for loan from the Buddhist Council.

4.6 Resources on the Web

BuddhaNet:

<http://www.buddhanet.net>

Texts from the Buddhist Publication Society (Sri Lanka):

<http://world.std.com/~metta/lib/bps/>

Access to Insight (Theravada Archives): <http://world.std.com/~metta/lib>

5. CLASSES

5.1 Class Structure

Essentially, do not give lectures, but rather guide children to teach themselves. Below is a suggested class structure. For more detailed description of the components see Section 5.2 below.

1. 5 minutes of silence / loving-kindness meditation / mindfulness of breathing to calm the mind.
2. Brief introduction:
give aims of the lesson.
3. Reading or review of texts assigned in the lesson/ viewing a video.
4. Discussion of the lesson material:
this should be an honest evaluation based on personal experience and observations.
Children should be encouraged to use their own judgement, rather than other people's ideas.
5. Additional contemplation (or meditation) practice, if time permits:
students should be given a topic and guided by the teacher.
6. Conclusions:
summarize the main accomplishments of the lesson,
review the new concepts,
help children to make personal resolutions on what to abandon, what to cultivate or improve.
7. Brief instructions for the next week's lesson.

5.2 Class Components

Lessons:

Each lesson contains material that will be discussed or practiced in each class. Ideally students should be advised of each lesson content one week in advance. In this way:

1. each class will be more effective, as students will already be familiar with the text or topic before the class.
2. there will be a continuum from one class to another without long breaks, and students will be able to incorporate what they have learnt in their Buddhist classes into their daily life.
3. the method will be similar to other subjects. Students will develop good habits or discipline, of preparing for classes and reviewing what they have learnt.

Discussions:

Each discussion should be simple, focussing on one subject/phenomenon and using simple examples from students daily life. To support the discussions, teachers should utilize suttas from The Book of Protection (e.g. *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*, *Saccavibhanga Sutta*, *Metta Sutta*, *Mangala Sutta*, *Ratana Sutta*).

Contemplations (reflective meditations or thinking):

These are given in the lessons by means of questions and are of 4 main kinds: of Buddha, oneself, other people and world in general. Teachers are also encouraged to create their own to supplement the lessons material.

Meditations:

Teach only very simple methods. Appropriate for beginners are meditation on breathing and loving-kindness meditation. After the meditation students should reflect on their meditation experience (e.g. reflect on the breathing process and on the effects of meditation on the mind).

6. QUESTIONNAIRES

Two questionnaires have been designed, to be given out to students: the “Initial Questionnaire” at the beginning of each course, and the “Final Questionnaire” at the end of each course. When completed, the first questionnaire will provide the teachers with general information on the students understanding of Buddhism prior to each course. The second questionnaire will give the teachers some information on how successful each course has been and how it might be improved in the future.

Name:.....




INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE:

Please answer the questions below:

1. Why did you join the Buddhist classes?



2. Are your parents Buddhists? If so, what kind of Buddhism do they practice?



3. What would you like to learn in these classes?



4. Are you willing to read the assigned texts before each class?




5. Are you willing to take good care of the books lent to you?




6. How much do you know about Buddhism:

a) Who was the Buddha?

b) When was he born and where did he live?





c) What did he realise (find, discover) ?

d) What did he teach?



e) Why did he teach others?




f) What is the Dhamma?

g) What is the Sangha?

h) What are the 5 Precepts?

i) Do you meditate and if yes, why ?

i) In what countries is Buddhism a major religion?



Name:.....



FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE:

Please answer the questions below:

1. Did you like the Buddhist studies? If not why not?

2. What parts of the course did you find easiest?

3. What parts of the course did you find most difficult?

4. What parts of the course did you find least interesting ?

5. What parts of the course did you find most interesting ?

6. Would you like to learn more about the Buddha's teachings? If yes, what especially would you like to learn about?

