

Sacred Hearts Parish

Religious Education

Catechist Handbook



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CATECHIST'S PRAYER

O Creator of the universe, Who set the stars in the heavens and causes the sun to rise and set, shed the light of Your Wisdom into the darkness of my mind. Fill my thoughts with the loving knowledge of You, that I may bring Your Light to others. Just as You can make even babies speak Your Truth, instruct my tongue to convey the wonderful glory of the Gospel. Make my intellect sharp, my memory clear, and my words eloquent, so that I may faithfully teach the mysteries which You have revealed.

—St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

WELCOME LETTER

Welcome to Sacred Hearts Parish Religious Education! It is a blessing to have the opportunity to work with you this year. You are entering a very special role in our parish: as a catechist, you are entrusted with the responsibility of teaching by word and example, the faith to the children entrusted to your care. You must be a teacher, an educator and a witness of the faith.

This handbook outlines the catechists' roles and the responsibilities within our parish Religious Education Program and within the Archdiocese of Boston. In addition, it includes a curriculum map for grades K-10, information about learning styles and methods, as well as several appendices that support the lessons being presented.

Please use this handbook, your textbook and syllabus, as well as the other resources that are available to you, to most effectively teach the parish youth entrusted to your care. You are encouraged to collaborate with the Coordinator of Religious Education and with each other to best serve our youth and their families. We are here to support you in your good work.

On behalf of our parish community, thank you for your love and devotion to our Catholic faith and your willingness and commitment to serve in the role of catechist in our Religious Education Program.

May the Holy Spirit be with us in all that we do this year as we guide, direct and teach our children by word and example in the Catholic faith.

In Christ,

Laura Foley and Beth Fullerton

CONGRATULATIONS!

In deciding to become a catechist, you have made an important decision, one that will enrich your life.

What is a Catechist?: The word catechist comes from the Greek word “echo.” Catechists are people who ECHO the Word of God. *“Catechists must hand on the teachings of Christ to those being catechized; ...Catechists must make the words of Christ their own: ‘My teaching is not my own but is from the one who sent me.’” National Directory for Catechesis (Ch 4:29E)*

Archdiocesan Requirements for Catechists: Each catechist is required to complete and submit the following documents: an annual CORI release form; a catechist information form; a Code of Conduct; and to read and agree to the Catechist Covenant. Each volunteer must also provide evidence that he/she has completed the Virtus/PGC program. The Archdiocese would also like all catechists to be certified. Information about that process is available through Beth and Laura.

Workshops and Training Sessions: Catechists should regularly communicate with Beth and Laura about their progress, and any concerns. All volunteers should attend at least one of the catechist retreats offered a year.

Arrival/Dismissal: Catechists must arrive to the appropriate meeting space at least 10 minutes before class; children must arrive promptly for the beginning of class. Children must be accompanied by an adult and enter and exit through the sole unlocked door. Catechists will greet their students in the meeting spot hall and escort them to their classroom after the assembly. Five minutes prior to the end of class, catechists will escort students back to the meeting space where they will meet their parent/guardian or other adult designee. If the adult has not arrived, the child will stay with the catechist and/or director until he or she arrives. No child will leave without an adult (unless the family has given a note to the CRE giving permission for an older sibling, relative, etc.) *Students in grades K-2 must be signed in and out of class. The appropriate sheets will be provided.*

Attendance: Attendance must be recorded in your catechist folder at the beginning of every class. Regular attendance is essential to a child’s development and learning in the Religious Education Program. Therefore, catechists should make the CRE aware of repeat absences either verbally or in the form of a note so that the CRE can assess the situation. There may be situations that prevent a child from attending class such as sickness, an injury, or a family commitment, however, children are expected to attend every class. If a child will not be attending class, parents should contact the catechist and/or CRE. All work missed during an

absence is the responsibility of the parent to work with their child. The catechist and director will work with the family so that all work has been made up.

Class Cancellation: In the event of inclement weather, I will post closures on our program Facebook page – www.facebook.com/shpre, Channels 5 and 7, as well as the websites for those stations. I will always try to put the information on our website, or to send an email, but these methods cannot be relied upon. When school is closed for weather, we are also closed.

Respectful Behavior: It is the expectation that children will come to class ready and prepared to learn and to participate in the class discussions in a thoughtful, prayerful and respectful manner. If a child becomes disruptive, notify the CRE and the child will meet with the CRE to complete the lesson. If the behavior continues, the parent will be asked to accompany the child to class.

Health: Information on students who have health issues, allergies, or are on medications must be noted on the registration form. The catechist will be notified of health issues that need to be brought to their attention and of any special procedures that must be followed. *If someone is hurt or ill during class, please notify the CRE asap. We may not administer any medicine. If students cannot self-medicate with an Epi-pen, a parent must stay with them.*

Safety: Please pick up your badge and folder as soon as you arrive and keep with you while present. Don't hesitate to approach and/or question any adult in the building that you don't recognize. In case of emergency, exit building (w/ folder) and meet at the Church (S&W) or far edge of parking lot (M&Conf.) If it is not safe to leave the classroom, stay calm and take steps to protect yourself and your students. Students should never be in a classroom unsupervised.

Child Safety Program: The Archdiocese of Boston mandates that every parish implement a child safety program for grades k-5 and Created for Love Program for grades 6-8. All catechists are encouraged to help implement this program, which is taught in three chunks throughout the year. Additionally, all volunteers are mandated reporters. Speak up immediately if a child discloses abuse to you or you suspect abuse.

Communication: Communication is key to the success of the program. Updates will be sent via email, summarized in the weekly bulletin column, or, when necessary, communicated by phone. Please also see our Facebook page for updates. *If you require a substitute, please let me know via email or phone at your earliest convenience.* Please also send home with students those items I leave in your catechist folder. Emailing/calling/sending home notes is encouraged!

Classroom Treats: Snack foods and beverages will not be provided for children. Exceptions to this must be cleared with the CRE at least a week in advance.

Materials: There is a bin in the classroom that contains materials for your use. Do not use materials from the classrooms. Please do not erase a chalkboard, nor write on a SmartBoard. Requests for additional supplies (copies, Rosaries, etc.) should be made one week in advance.

Learning Styles: The Four Modalities

Visual Preference

Students who have a visual strength or preference:

- ◆ **want the teacher to provide demonstrations**
- ◆ **find it easy to learn through descriptions and reading**
- ◆ **often use lists to keep up and organize thoughts**
- ◆ **often recognize words by sight**
- ◆ **often have well developed imaginations**
- ◆ **are easily distracted by movement or action in the classroom**
- ◆ **tend to be unaware of noise**
- ◆ **Roughly 60% of students are visual learners.**

Auditory Preference

Students who have an auditory strength or preference

- ◆ **want the teacher to provide verbal instructions**
- ◆ **find it easy to learn by listening**
- ◆ **enjoy dialogues, discussions, and plays**
- ◆ **often do well working out solutions or problems by talking them out**
- ◆ **are easily distracted by noise and often need to work where it is relatively quiet**

Tactile Preference

Students who have a tactile strength or preference:

- ◆ **do best when they take notes either during a lecture or when reading something new or difficult**
- ◆ **often like to draw or doodle to remember**
- ◆ **do well with hands-on activities such as projects, demonstrations, or labs**

Kinesthetic Preference

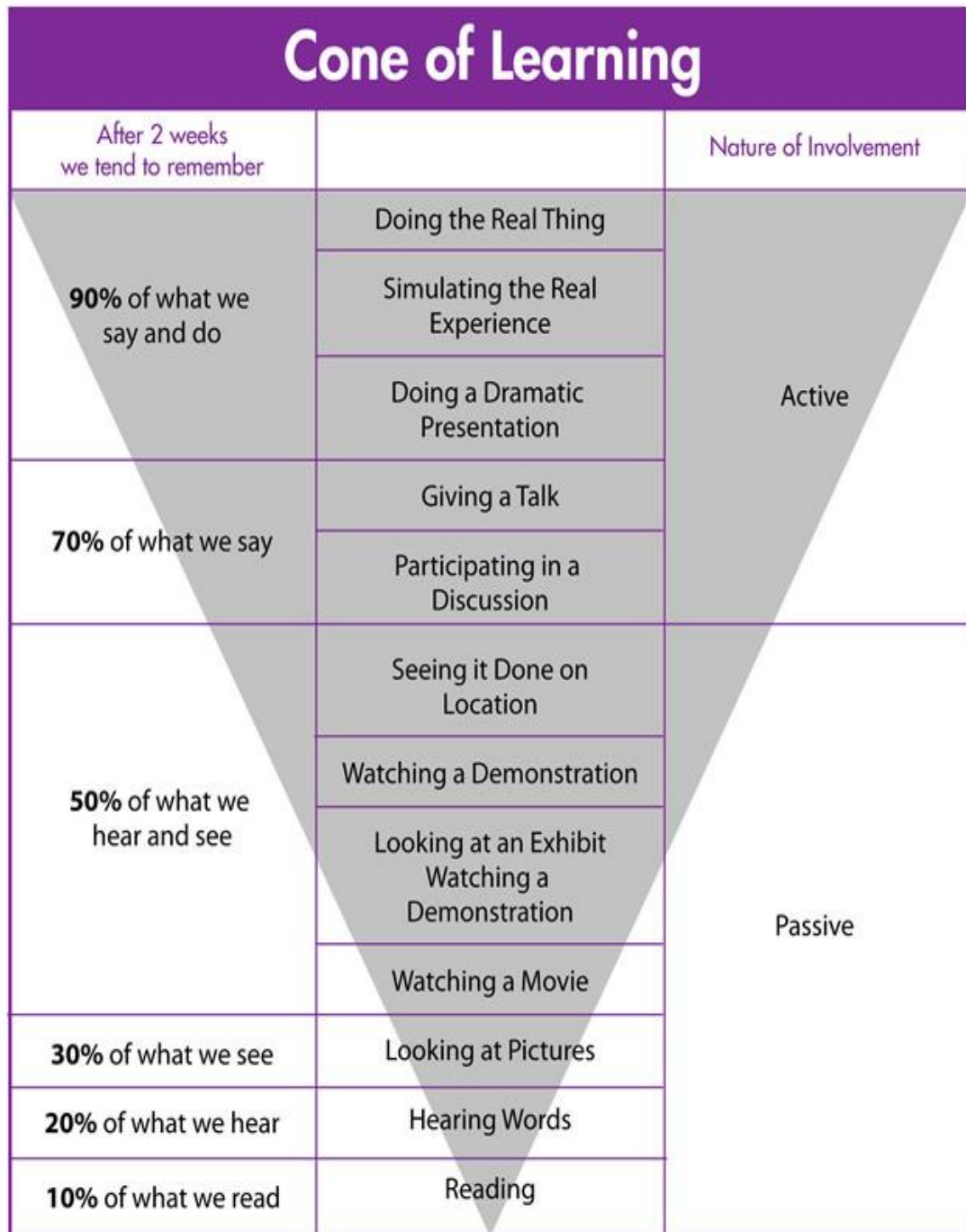
Students who have a kinesthetic strength or preference:

- ◆ **do best when they are involved or active**
- ◆ **often have high energy levels**
- ◆ **think and learn best while moving**
- ◆ **often lose much of what is said during lecture**
- ◆ **have problems concentrating when asked to sit and read**

- ◆ prefer to do rather than watch or listen
- ◆ Most children are kinesthetic and become more tactile in the first grade

www.cofc.edu/~csl

<http://www.onderwijsvanmorgen.nl/leren-leren>



Source: Cone of Learning adapted from (Dale, 1969)

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

Date _____

Chapter _____

1. Introduction (this should include prayer and a brief review of the big ideas from the previous lesson)
2. Content

	What the Concept Is	How you'll teach it
Big Idea/Concept #1		
Big Idea/Concept #2		
Big Idea/Concept #3		

3. Wrap-up
 - i. Question and Answer or Short Activity (this will help you gauge if you were successful in sharing the ideas)
 - ii. Closing questions: What did you hear tonight that was interesting? That was new to you?
 - iii. Hand out anything that needs to be handed out/tell them about anything coming up in the parish.

**I'm happy to make photocopies for you if you like!*

LESSON SUPPLEMENT IDEAS

Activity	Resources I have	Notes
Play a song and have the children learn it.	Sadlier cds (1 for each grade) Etc.	Are you really ambitious? Teach them hand gestures! Songs are great for grade-level Masses.
Read to them	Bookshelves full of childrens' Bibles, large and small picture books, etc., etc.	Let them sit on the carpet if there is one. Help them find and read stories in the Bible.
Ask them to color a picture relating to the chapter you've discussed or a Bible story you've read	Printer paper and construction paper, crayons, and markers, coloring books	Letting the kids color/doodle while you talk can be a way of keeping their hands busy while they listen to you.
Complete a craft	A multitude of craft materials and craft ideas	These can reinforce lesson ideas really well and make great take-home items!
Look at and discuss a piece of Catholic art with them	Variety of digital and hard copy artwork	No in-depth knowledge needed
Have them act out a skit	Several books with skit ideas	Lets them be active; good for older grades.
Teach them about a saint by reading to them about him/her or having them complete a craft, etc.	Many saint books and craft materials, calendars with saint feast days listed	Can be easily adapted to any grade-level. To have special impact, talk about a saint on or near his/her feast day.
Show a short movie or a movie excerpt	I have dozens of Catholic videos and a few dvds. I don't have a VCR set-up, but I can work something out with enough advanced notice.	All videos must be approved by me before viewing
Pray together, covering the prayers taught at your grade-level	Prayer sheets, Rosaries, prayer books, etc.	Begin class by standing in a circle in the classroom and praying together.
Have them write their own prayer	Paper, pencils, prayer books	Have them share these if they are comfortable doing so!
Play an interactive game like Around the World or Jeopardy using lesson-based questions	Game ideas and templates	Helps reinforce lesson material
Have the children complete a service project	Project ideas and materials	These are a wonderful way of helping the children live out their faith
Reward them for a job well done	Holy cards, bookmarks, stickers, small trinkets, etc.	We can't offer food as a reward because so many of our students have allergies.

RE resources are primarily kept at the Parish Office. I invite you to schedule a time to come visit, or to contact me several days (one week is better) before your lesson to ask me to bring some items for your use. Thank you!

Also, see our pinterest page – www.pinterest.com/shpre - for dozens of other ideas!

TIPS THAT WORK

Learn and use the students' names

Create structure, order, routine

Create expectations and consequences; for example, have a three strikes and you're out policy— and stick to it! No child(ren) should hijack a class.

Lead students to the classroom, and lead them back to your dismissal spot. Even this helps to establish your leadership.

The students don't want you to be their buddy. Our first priority is their safety. Our second priority is transmitting the faith to them; helping them strengthen their relationship with Jesus and learn about His Church. Making sure they have fun is an extra (albeit an important one, as it keeps them interested in coming back each week!)

Prepare well. If you come in without a solid lesson, it's much more likely that the time and the students will get away from you.

Express personal interest in the topic/the faith – they will pick up on your energy and enthusiasm level

Consider wearing a "toolbelt" that keeps important items like pencils and tissues at your disposal so that you're not pulled off task by students in need of these items.

Have a plan B in your back pocket to use in extreme situations (things just aren't going as planned). Shouldn't be a game, per se, so that the students think that if they're not cooperating that you'll give up and move to a game. Having them sit quietly and read the text themselves, underlining things they think is important, is more helpful.

Request highlighters so kids can highlight points you tell them are important, or have them underline.

When reading from the text, often do the reading yourself. Some kids like to volunteer, but kids will learn best when they hear the text being read coherently and carefully.

Spend significant time in prayer with the students. And pray for your students and their families outside of class!

FURTHER RESOURCES

See Beth to borrow one of these items or to learn more!

Joe Paprocki's books

Catholicism for Dummies

Catholic Handbook

Essential videos from the Archdiocese - all online

Catechist certification class

Multiple great apps