

PLANNING THE BEST LESSONS



1. Before we do any planning, we have to open ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When we sit down to prepare, we should always spend a few minutes asking God to open our minds and hearts and to guide our planning. Think of the children in your class and remind yourself that you are doing God's work, not your own. Beginning with prayer is a crucial step in lesson planning because it places the whole process in the proper context.
2. A goal is important, but we need to be specific; we need to establish learning outcomes. These could also be referred to as "objectives," statements that clearly articulate the specific expectations and outcomes of the lesson. Children are more likely to learn when they (and their teachers), understand what they are expected to learn. Learning outcomes give children and teachers specific goals to pursue, and when they know their exact destination, it's easier to decide on the route to get there.
3. Lessons should be planned to flow through 3 elements. The first element is where we Explore Life ("Tell me what happened and why..."). The second element is where we Share Tradition ("When I was your age..." or "Let me tell you a story..."). The third element of our lesson is where we attempt to Integrate Life and Tradition ("What did you learn from this experience/my story...?" or "So, how will you be different next time...?"). Keeping these three elements in mind can greatly benefit our lesson planning. They tell us to begin our lesson by focusing on experiences the children are having, and then relate those experiences to our Catholic tradition. Finally, we have to show children how to apply our tradition to their daily living and decisions.



Children remember:
20% of what they hear;
30% of what they see;
50% of what they hear and see;
70% of what they say; and
90% of what they do.

Unfortunately, it's a fact that we teachers do 70% of the talking in class and ask 94% of all questions! As we look at the variety of activities available to us, we need to be creative but not gimmicky. Our goal is not to be flashy. Instead, we need to select the activities that will best engage the children and help them achieve the learning outcomes we've identified. In a word, we have to invite a lot more "doing and saying" on the part of the children.

One final note: Always finish your planning where it started...in prayer. Just as you asked the Holy Spirit to guide your planning, thank the Spirit for the inspiration you have received and pray for guidance as you teach your lesson.

LISTEN BETTER, LEARN MORE

In one of the Family Circus cartoon strips, the little girl looks up at her father, who is reading the newspaper, and says: "Daddy, you have to listen to me with your eyes as well as your ears." Here are some tips for you as a Catechist to listen to the children in your group:

- **Be interested and attentive.** Children can tell whether they have a person's interest and attention by the way the person replies or does not reply. Forget about other distractions. Maintain eye contact to show that you really are with the child.
- **Encourage talking.** Some children need an invitation to start talking. You might begin with, "Tell me about your day at school." Children are more likely to share their ideas and feelings when others think them important.
- **Listen patiently.** People think faster than they speak. With limited vocabulary and experience in talking, children often take longer than adults to find the right word. Listen as though you have plenty of time.
- **Hear children out.** Avoid cutting children off before they have finished speaking. It is easy to form an opinion or reject children's views before they finish what they have to say. It may be difficult to listen respectfully and not correct misconceptions, but respect their right to have and express their opinions.
- **Listen to nonverbal messages.** Many messages children send are communicated nonverbally by their tone of voice, their facial expressions, their energy level, their posture, or changes in their behavior patterns. You can often tell more from the way a child says something than from what is said. When a child comes in obviously upset, be sure to find a quiet time then or sometime that day to help explore those feelings.

8 Beatitudes For Catechists

By Sr. Marie Roccapriore, MPF

Blessed are the catechists who listen to their students, especially the ones with repeated questions, for they possess **THE EARS OF CHRIST.**

Blessed are the catechists who see the needs of their students, especially the ones unrecognized by others, for they possess **THE EYES OF CHRIST.**

Blessed are the catechists who speak kindly to their students, especially the ones without positive motivation, for they possess **THE MOUTH OF CHRIST.**

Blessed are the catechists who gently touch their students, especially the ones who feel the stings of violence, for they possess **THE HANDS OF CHRIST.**

Blessed are the catechists who think prayerfully of their students, especially those who don't know God, for they possess **THE MIND OF CHRIST.**

Blessed are the catechists who show love to their students, especially the ones with unlovable traits, for they possess **THE HEART OF CHRIST.**

Blessed are the catechists who walk patiently with their students, especially the ones lacking spiritual guidance, for they possess **THE FEET OF CHRIST.**

Blessed are the catechists who persevere in their faith-sharing ministry, especially when their efforts seem in vain. For they possess **THE HEALING PRESENCE OF CHRIST AND THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**