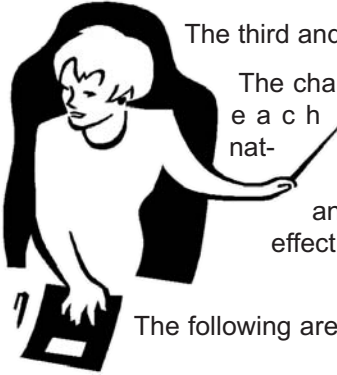




Formation Wheel

IN SERVICE TO THE MASTER:
DOING...CATECHESIS EFFECTIVELY

Nancy Dunn



The third and final dimension of the Catechist Certification Program, In Service to the Master is *doing*.

The challenge before every catechist is to create a dynamic, interactive and creative experience each time his/her group gathers. *Doing* is the ability to communicate the Gospel message with natural ease. Facilitating a group creatively and dynamically is an art that needs to be learned and practiced. Understanding specific age-appropriate methods and activities, and the unique characteristics and special gifts of a particular age group are necessary for effective catechetical ministry.

The following are components of an effective catechist:

- † Shapes a social environment in which faith can be nurtured
- † Creates a good and safe physical environment
- † Uses creative activities in learning
- † Develops successful session plans
- † Enables learners to pray together
- † Uses teaching skills that apply to the specific age level of the learner
- † Understands the characteristics of human development
- † Understands the characteristics of the stages of faith development
- † Uses appropriate prayer forms that will lead to the inclusion of all children
- † Recognizes the characteristics of cognitive, psychosocial, moral and faith growth, and creates lessons and physical environments, knowing how learners build knowledge, construct meaning and relate to others.

Doing is the ability to communicate the Gospel message with natural ease.

Resources

Video Training

- Echoes of Faith – *Introduction to the Learner*
- Echoes of Faith – *Methods for Grades 1 and 2*
- Echoes of Faith – *Methods for Grades 3 and 4*
- Echoes of Faith – *Methods for Grades 5 and 6*
- Echoes of Faith – *Methods for Grades 7 and 8*



Echoes of Faith or any video curriculum can be used in small group setting (a few catechists meet at someone's home) or as an in-service offered to a larger group through your faith formation ministry.

Additional video/DVDs are available through the Media Center, including education on effective teaching methods for special need students (ADHD, ADD, Autistic, etc.) Contact Jeanne Pirc, Media Librarian at (815) 727-6411 x267 or at jpirc@dioceseofjoliet.org for rental information and availability.

Please browse our media catalog, both for books and videos on our website at <http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/reo>.

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(In Service To The Master...continued from Page 1)

Diocese-sponsored or Parish/Parish School-sponsored Programs

While on our website, please check out the calendar. Many publisher-sponsored or Cluster-sponsored workshops are listed there and are open to everyone!

There are also workshops sponsored by the Office of Ministry Formation. Information on these workshops can be found on the Diocese of Joliet website: <http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/> by searching under the Event Calendar.

When I was a child, I spoke like child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

-1 Corinthians 13:11

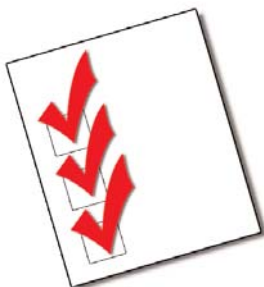
WHY MAKE THE SWITCH TO WHOLE PARISH FAITH FORMATION?

Brian Topping

This article follows up on the article, Key Values of Whole Parish Faith Formation (WPFF), published in the November/December 2006 *Formation Wheel*. In that article, the underlying values of a WPFF approach to catechesis were explained in detail. To summarize, WPFF values formation that is lifelong, targeted at all generations, gathering the whole community to learn, using one core curriculum for all ages, fostering participation in the life of the parish, offered to everyone in the parish, and supplemented by other age-specific value-added programs.

With an understanding of the underlying values of WPFF, the question can now be asked, "Why Make the Switch?" Generally speaking, parishes make the switch when they are not happy with the results they are achieving by their current methods of ministry. At the very least, even parishes achieving "good results" with their current methods make the switch because they believe a WPFF approach will yield even better results. Otherwise, why do it? However, parishes not happy with their current results do not always look to WPFF for improvement. WPFF is just one of many options a parish may consider to help them achieve the results they are looking for.

This makes identifying the results a parish is looking for critically important. Whether or not a parish ends up choosing WPFF is not as important as whether or not it chooses an approach that will help it reach its goals. The steps below outline the process a parish can use to reach that conclusion.



Step One: Evaluation

In this step, the parish determines if it is satisfied with the results it is currently achieving. Each catechetical ministry should exist to fulfill some purpose, meet some goal. Catechesis is understood as the second movement in the evangelization process. Therefore, catechetical ministry, by its very nature, exists to support something bigger than itself. Examples may include empowering disciples or increasing participation in the life of the faith community (including attending Mass).

The Evaluation step seeks to determine how well catechetical ministry supports the larger goal. Since many parishes have not named this larger goal, evaluation can be difficult. In these cases, individual catechetical ministries may evaluate themselves against their own stated goals. Once this evaluation is done, a parish can determine if they are satisfied with the results. As an example, a parish evaluation might find that only 25% of religious education students attend Mass on a regular basis. Parishes then can determine if those results are acceptable.

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Step Two: Identify Desired Results

If, after the Evaluation step, a parish determines it is not satisfied with the results, determining desired results is the next step. Using the 25% Mass attendance example from above, a parish would have to identify what percentage it would be happy with in what timeframe. As this is just one example, the parish would have to identify desired results for all those findings they are not satisfied with. Once all the desired results have been identified, a parish can proceed to step three.



Step Three: Identify Available Options

Organizations are perfectly aligned to get the results they are currently getting. Thus, if a parish wants to achieve different results, it means that parish has to do something differently. Using the desired results named in step two, parishes come up with all the viable options for achieving as many of those results as possible. This could be anything from changing the resources used (text series, program materials, etc.), the methodology used, the people (including training issues) involved, and even the logistics. Once the parish identifies an option that meets the most desired results, it can proceed to step four.



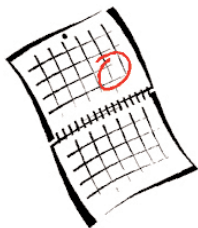
Step Four: Conduct Feasibility Study

Just because a parish identifies an option that meets many of its desired results does not mean that option will work for the parish. There could be a variety of deterring factors, such as budget, personnel, facility space, etc. The Feasibility Study examines whether an approach identified as meeting the desired results would actually work at a specific parish. Step Four should be repeated until the parish has identified at least one feasible approach out of all the available options.



Step Five: Decide on the New Approach

Deciding on a new approach means much more than just picking one. If the new approach calls the parish to do things differently, then the parish should re-align its operating structure to best support that new approach. In the case of a WFFF approach, this may mean changing job descriptions, budgets, meeting space availability, schedules, marketing materials, and websites. Remember, doing things differently will yield different results.



Step Six: Implement

As soon as the infrastructure for the new approach is in place, the parish is ready to implement it. Once implemented, the parish lives with it for a specified period of time. Remembering that it takes a minimum of three years for organizational change to take hold, that time period should be chosen with care in order to give the new approach time to establish within the parish.

The process described here may or may not point the parish in the direction of WFFF. And that is okay. Too many parishes nationally jumped on the Generations of Faith bandwagon without really understanding why they were doing it or all that was involved. It was simply an exciting new process. WFFF works great for parishes that need it to help achieve their desired results. Then and only then does a parish make the switch to WFFF.



SUMMARY: CHILDREN GETTING WIRED EARLY FOR HIGH TECH

(Reprinted with permission from Ian Jukes. View the entire article at <http://homepage.mac.com/iajukes/blogwavestudio/index.html>)



Children in the United States are using video games, cellphones and portable music players by age 7 --- about six months earlier than just a year ago, according to a recent online survey of 3,540 parents. That's good news for the electronics industry, but is it healthy for kids? A growing number of experts are beginning to wonder...

"...There is enough evidence out there to say that if you overuse any of these technologies, you're going to have problems," said Alan Hedge, a professor of ergonomics at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y.

Is there a health risk? Claims of electronics-related health problems in kids are growing...

...In Louisiana, an iPod user sued Apple Computer in February, claiming the popular portable music player could cause users to lose their hearing. Regulators in France have already forced Apple to turn down the volume on iPods sold there.

In a Boston University study several years ago, 40 percent of sixth-graders who regularly used computers complained of muscular-skeletal disorders. A study in Australia found that 60 percent of computer users aged 10 to 17 years had similar complaints.

"Part of the key to all of this is moderation," said Karen Jacobs, a Boston University occupational therapy professor who led the survey of parents conducted by Port Washington, N.Y.-based research company NPD Group. "The excessive, continuous use of anything isn't good..."

...McGrath, like most parents, said he and wife Jackie don't worry too much about health problems associated with such technology. They try to make sure their kids get enough exercise and try to limit their time with video games and other devices.

Ergonomics experts advise kids to take "stretch breaks" every 15 to 30 minutes when playing video games or using computers, to use good posture and position their hands correctly, and generally limit their playing time.

Health problems could crop up when kids get older...

...Hedge said that's because kids can develop poor habits, such as bad posture, easily. Also, just like football injuries or twisted knees from running, injuries to muscles and fingers can resurface years later when kids grow up and are required to use computers or other electronics equipment every day.

Some electronics companies are taking notice of the health concerns that come with their products...

...Kids, though, are inundated with commercials and other marketing for gadgets. Often, parents buy them the stuff they want.

In the NPD Group survey, about 41 percent of children between 4 and 14 years old owned their own video game system. About 14 percent had their own cellphones, portable DVD players and desktop computers, according to responses from their parents.

NPD analyst Anita Frazier said kids are probably plugging into to gadgets at an earlier age because of both access and exposure to them.

"As they become more prevalent in the household, and as kids increasingly see their role models [parents, older siblings] using these products, they naturally will want to try them themselves," she said in an e-mail interview...

"...In the period of 10 years, between the cellphones, the GameCubes, the Game Boys and everything else ... there's been a huge jump," he said. "Today, they have all these different little high-tech gimmicks to keep them entertained."

