



DIOCESE OF LANSING
M I C H I G A N

Catechist Formation Program: Facets of Mentoring a Catechist

How to fulfill the steps of Mentoring
in the Catechist Formation Program.

Please note: the title “Catechist” refers to teachers in Catholic Schools as well as Catechists in parish Religious Education Program.

1. Faith Sharing with Mentor
2. Observing Experienced Catechist
3. Curriculum Mapping and Choosing Resources
4. Being Observed/Evaluated
5. Reflection with Mentor

Faith Sharing with Mentor –

Principals and DREs: The workshops in the Catechist Formation programs are intended to foster growth and maturity in the personal life of the catechist. Mentors are trained to set that goal as their top priority when discussing workshop content with the catechist. We wish to foster a personal and lively discussion about our faith and about the ways that Jesus has affected our lives. (Cf. Mark 5:19)

Observing an Experienced Catechist –

All potential catechists/teachers should observe an experienced catechist before they lead in a classroom.

For Principals: Teachers would have done a good deal of general classroom observation while studying for their certification. Depending on the types of classrooms they observed they may be eligible to receive credit for this step. It is best that teachers observe religious lessons where Gods’ pedagogy will be on display. Teaching religion, especially with younger children, should be different than teaching subjects and so it is best for a teacher to observe an experienced and successful catechist when they begin teaching. This can should happen in the first semester after being hired.

For DREs: This can be a valuable step in the discernment process for a potential catechist. The DRE should use this step for a potential catechist who they have begun to mentor. If the DRE

recognizes that a person has the skills necessary and has a call from God to be a catechist, having them observe an experienced catechist will be a very valuable step. After the potential catechist has completed the observation they should discern in prayer and then discuss with the DRE in an effort to discern their potential as catechist.

Ideally a potential catechist would operate as an apprentice to an experienced catechist for some time, possibly a year, which would allow long-term observation of the experienced catechist and formation of their own. During this time the potential catechist would be able to complete many, if not all, the appropriate formation course, 'Foundational Catechetical Certification.'

Curriculum Mapping

Principals and DREs: The content that we teach in religious education is set into a curriculum by the bishop and administered jointly by the Office of Catholic Schools and the Office of Catechesis. Depending on the grade, the DRE/Principal determines (with pastor approval) which resources and/or textbooks will be used to fulfill the requirements of the curriculum. The catechist begins to map out the course of lessons according to the curriculum. After a thorough introduction to the curriculum the catechist would then develop lesson plans. A teacher's manual from a textbook series will help as a resource but is not sufficient in and of itself. Other resources need to be used.

Being Observed/Evaluated

For Principals: You are instructed to observe your Teachers on a regular basis. It is important that you observe them teaching religion once or twice a year to help them develop the best techniques possible in passing on the faith.

For DREs: Once a catechist has completed the previous steps and completed the formation courses they can be trusted to begin teaching. This may occur while they are assisting in the classroom of an experienced catechist or in their own classroom. The DRE or mentor should observe the new catechist in action and perform a proper evaluation using an approved evaluation form (check with the Office of Catechesis for the appropriate form).

The DRE should follow-up this observation with appropriate attention given to both strengths and weaknesses of the catechist. The intention is to help the catechist rely on their strengths and develop their weaknesses so to meet the needs of their students. We are working to form them, encourage them, and to build them up. The catechist should be encouraged to discuss their evaluation, including their strengths and weaknesses, with their mentor.

Every catechist should be evaluated at least once a year.

Reflection with Mentor

Principals and DREs: It is important that the mentor maintain a good level of interest in the Catechist by engaging in regular conversation with them. Individual conversation or small group discussion among a group of catechists led by a mentor will suffice. This should be as natural as possible. The mentor can seek out the catechist before or after class for a quick conversation. This would include conversation about how catechesis is going, how the students are responding, how formation coursework is going, etc. The mentor will need to be intentional about planning for these and making them happen.

The mentor should also plan to have these discussions with their mentees at the end of each year. This provides an opportunity for the mentee to reflect on the year as a whole, the personal growth they experienced, assessment of their catechetical work with their students, and to discern about next year's plan for teaching. For volunteer catechists this is a good time to discern with them about their plans to continue in the ministry the following year.