



THE LOCAL CHURCH DISCIPLER/EDUCATOR IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Who do we mean by “local church discipler/educator”? You come with many names and position descriptions, but you have similar responsibilities:

- Christian formation and education, perhaps for one or more age group
- Adult Christian discipleship
- Program ministry
- Coordinator of an age-level ministry
- Ministry for families (and children)

If you have been hired by a local church (perhaps your own local church), there is a new resource to help equip you to do the kind of effective ministry that you desire.

WHAT IS THE RESOURCE?

The core curriculum is a self-guided study in six modules, each of which requires study, work, and reflection in addition to the reading and group time. They can be taken in any order. You might want to skim all the modules and then decide the correct order for you. However, if you are in a peer or leader-led group, you should be working on the same modules at the same time as the other group members.

The modules are

1. Call and Vocation
2. God and the Bible
3. Faith Formation & Christian Education
4. The United Methodist Church
5. My Congregation and Context
6. Administration and Leadership

Each module has clearly identified information goals, action goals, and key results so you get a foundation, gain practical skills, and see how it will affect your personal and vocational development. This is an introductory course that also provides suggestions for further investigation.

Most learning and development is easier and more effective if there is opportunity for group interaction, reflection, idea sharing, and support. In addition to the self-guided activities, the resource adds a plan for how to use the core curriculum in a leader- or peer-led group. You should expect to form or join such a group. (There is also an implementation guide for the conference or CEF to help you get started and participate in the self- and group study.)

WHO IS THIS FOR?

The Discipler/Educator Training is for persons working in the areas of Christian formation and education or discipleship (regardless of the job title) and who are not in an academic or certification program. Many churches will hire someone from the congregation with a heart for ministry for children, for example, who may lack some professional credentials. A school teacher, for example, may have excellent background in secular education, but no foundation in biblical education.

Persons hired by the local church may find it difficult or impossible to pursue ad-

vanced formal education or certification studies that are endorsed by The United Methodist Church. Discipler/Educator Training is designed to give you the foundation and credentials you need to work competently and faithfully at your church.

How Does This Work?

Ideally, this preparation process will be guided and/or managed by a staff person or group within the annual conference or local CEF group, though it can be peer-led.

Self- and Group Study

You can do this all through the self-study guide, though the experience will be much improved if you have a group for networking, support, idea sharing, and accountability. In either case, you will work through the reading and core activities. There is a “prompt” for the reading materials—ideas, dates, trends, and such to look for—as you read. While this is a self-guided process, it is not a solitary one. You will do more than just reading, thinking, and writing.

Each module will ask you to write a summary reflection of what you have learned and experienced. Writing down what you have learned and processed in each module is important. Writing will require you to consolidate your thinking and reflections in an orderly way. Your accountability partner will expect to see this paper and discuss it with you.

Some modules will be completed sooner than others, depending on the reading list and the requirements of the module plans. There is no suggested timeline, so you will establish your own schedule. Creating a deadline calendar with targeted completion dates will help you stay on track.

The group activities are added to the core activities to help you process what you are learning and experiencing with people who

will become peers in your professional network. The group sessions may be led in class format by a professional Christian educator or other ministry professional. The directions are clear enough to be used by a group of peers; you and colleagues with similar goals who partner for the learning experience.

Support from the Local Church

It is important for the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, pastor, and other church officers to know you are doing this (they should have recommended it), to support you in it, and to provide some financial assistance for it.

Many of the activities in the self-study require your interaction with other staff, with your teachers and leaders, and with other leaders in the congregation. They need to know and understand that you will not only be working with them in ministry, but that they will be helping you with your continuing education.

An Accountability Partner

One final partner is essential for both the self- and group study option. Select one accountability partner to work with you throughout whatever modules you pursue. This may be a respected member of your church or neighboring church, a member of CEF, a certified Christian education/formation professional from another church, or even a friend who will promise to hold your feet to the fire. This partner need not be in a church-related profession, but he or she should be acquainted with the church and appreciate your goals.

What Does This Cost?

The expense will vary depending on the number of books you buy, but it will certainly cost much less than formal classes in a college or seminary. There is no registration fee or cost for anything on-line.

If the annual conference administers the training, there may be some expense, for example, for a weekend retreat format.

WHAT WILL I GET FROM THIS?

You will get back in proportion to what you invest—an understanding of who you are as a ministry professional and the foundation of basic Christian formation and education skills needed to guide this ministry in your local church. You will also gain experience in leadership and develop a network of supporters and colleagues in a similar ministry. Membership in CEF will provide more benefits over time.

This is a good beginning. To continue your own vocational and spiritual development, there are suggestions for further study and experience in each module.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

That depends a little bit on whether you came upon this information independently, have been recruited by your SPRC, or were encouraged by your CEF colleagues. If you are initiating the process, begin by enlisting the support of your church professional colleagues.

- The list of the information goals, action goals, and key results is at the end of this guide (with each in their own module). Peruse them and download the modules for a more thorough idea of what will be expected of you.
- You may also want to look at the Conference and Church Implementation Guide and make a copy for your pastor and SPRC chairperson, if needed.
- Talk to the pastor, your immediate supervisor (if not your pastor), and the chairperson of SPRC. The core activities are self-guided, so they can

fold around, and in some cases will be a part of, your regular work.

- You may need to initiate the conversation and negotiation with the key leaders to account for the time this will take and what you will be expected to do.
- The costs are minimal, compared to more formal educational options, but there are some, at least for books. Include the financial issues in your conversation with supervisors.
- When you have approval from the church to proceed, let other church officers and your teachers and leaders know. You will be interviewing them, working with them in teams and in various other activities, and asking some things of them. They need to know that in advance. (This will not be burdensome, but neither should it be a surprise to them.)
- Identify your accountability partner and/or mentor. If the conference or local CEF is initiating this training, they may also help to identify a partner for you.
- Your church, conference, or CEF may help with this; in any case, try to identify other disciple/educators in your area with whom you can form a small group for the peer learning.
- Decide the modules you will work on and the order. (You may change with the needs of your peer group.
- Work on the book and resource list. Some items are specific; look for those first. Books do go out of print, so you may need to search for a substitute. Ask more seasoned colleagues, your peer group, and your pastor for recommendations. (Web links also may change, which is why there are directions to find, rather than all direct links, in this material.) You may not need to read everything on the list, so prioritize.

- You are strongly encouraged to do all the self-study activities, and that may be naturally monitored by the way your peer group organizes, but you are on an honor system, of sorts. If you select only some, negotiate this with your supervisory team.
- You can also work at your own pace, though that will also be influenced by the way your peer group works together. The point is to become better acquainted with the foundational information and experiences as you cultivate your own spiritual leadership, so try not to be stressed by the clock. At the same time, it will be helpful to establish a deadline calendar to help keep on track. Life encroaches on the best of intentions.
- Remember that this is an exercise in **spiritual** leadership. It is intended to fill your soul and not just your head. Take time to engage in the spiritual disciplines and plan time for regular sabbath. They are just as important as the study activities.
- Keep in touch with your accountability partner and/or mentor. If you have a local chapter of CEF, join and attend. The national CEF is a different membership, and you will benefit from joining that as well.

WHAT ELSE IS OUT THERE?

Educational opportunities abound! Check the e-letters and websites of your church and annual conference. Look at the web-

sites or other publicity from the different agencies, particularly www.gbod.org.

“[Effective Teaching for Transformation](http://www.gbod.org/education),” at www.gbod.org/education in six-modules. These modules are complete session outlines, with handouts, for three-hour face-to-face workshops. They are geared toward beginning teachers, but more seasoned teachers have found them helpful.

Sign up for free e-letters and resources, such as [iTeach](http://www.gbod.org/education) (monthly, for teachers and leaders in Christian education and formation) and [Christian Education Week](http://www.gbod.org/education) (annually, at www.gbod.org/education).

Peruse all the great stuff in age-level ministries on the web at www.gbod.org. Look in the tab Minister to People.

CEF hosts short, focused events around the country in the odd-numbered years. The larger biennial event is held on the even-numbered years. The 2012 event is at Green Lake, WI. Check out www.cefumc.org for details for both national and regional events.

This basic course may lead you to pursue your professional development further. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry offers certification in several ministry areas, including Christian education, Children’s ministry, Youth ministry, Older Adult ministry, camping, music, and more. Explore the description and requirements for the different areas at www.gbhem.org for [certification](http://www.gbhem.org).



This pamphlet is prepared by the Faith Formation and Discipleship Groups at the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church © 2011.

For more information about the needs and requirements in specific ministry areas, see the leadership series *Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation*, which includes

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| * Christian Education | * Children’s Ministries | * Youth Ministries |
| * Adult Ministries | * Family Ministries | * Small Group Ministry |

Go to www.cokesbury.com or call 1-800-672-1789. Please also visit our website www.gbod.org