



LOCAL CHURCH DISCIPLER/EDUCATOR TRAINING

MODULE 3: FAITH FORMATION AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

OVERVIEW OF TOPICS FOR SELF- OR GROUP STUDY

The self-study and related group activities select from among these topics. As you continue your own professional development, you may wish to dig deeper in these areas.

BASIC TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Age-level development
- Teaching/learning: Multiple Intelligences; learning hooks; teaching techniques; class environment; transformational teaching; information and formation
- Understanding scope and sequence/ see it in curriculum
- Adapting activities

TOOLS FOR TEACHING

- What technology is available in the church and how to best use it
- Learning new ways technology can help get the job done
- Curriculum: what is it; how to evaluate and choose it
- *Forecast* and other catalogs

FAITH DEVELOPMENT

- Understanding where people are in their faith development/ understand stages of faith
- Thinking about a plan to help people grow in faith maturity
- Spiritual types

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

- Importance of ministry of volunteers/teachers
- Understand importance and process for teacher identification, inviting/recruitment, training, appreciation
- Plan and choose resources for teacher training
- Mentoring
- Listening; asking questions
- Understanding power and empowerment

Information Goals: *I will*

1. Become familiar with age-level characteristics
2. Understand basic stages of faith development
3. Know basic teaching and learning techniques to others
4. Be aware of the curriculum resources available and how to evaluate them

Actions Goals: *I will*

5. Practice deep listening and ask the powerful questions that enable my teachers and group leaders to do well
6. Advise teachers and group leaders about the theological and age-level appropriateness of the curriculum they choose and use
7. Develop some means of developing the skills and faith maturity of my teachers and group leaders
8. Establish measures for effective teaching and will work with my teachers and group leaders on evaluation

Key Result:

I have a working knowledge of age-level characteristics and spiritual formation. I have the skills needed and the relationship with my teachers and group leaders to be able to recruit, motivate, and equip them. I offer clear guidance and state expectations of teachers and group leaders, and they know what they can expect from me. Because of our relationship and clear expectations, I can offer them constructive evaluative feedback. We plan together for intentional faith development through the life span. My teachers and group leaders have a working knowledge of the various teaching and learning tools to support that development.

LEARNING PLANS

CORE ACTIVITIES for SELF-STUDY OPTION

1. Select an accountability partner

This is someone (who has **no** supervisory responsibility) who will help you to keep on track and with whom you can talk honestly as you reflect on your learnings and experiences.

Read the suggested materials. Schedule them to be interspersed among the other activities. As you read, consider what the texts have to say about the Module 3 topics mentioned above.

2. Select a Mentor

One action goal is to act as a guide to your teachers and group leaders. If you are to be a mentor to them, you may also want to select and work with a mentor yourself. If your accountability partner has the professional experience to be a good mentor, you do not have to find a different one, though that might yield different fruit. If he or she doesn't have those credentials, select a mentor who does, perhaps from CEF or another church. Work with your mentor to establish your own covenant: what you each can give and expect to receive and how you want to be in relationship. If you are not a member, consider joining Christian Educators Fellowship; www.cefumc.org.

3. Observe Classes and Groups

Over time, observe each of the classes or groups for children. Watch for how they interact with each other and adults, engage the lesson material, understand rules and other group dynamics, and so on. Use web chart A, "Development Through the Life Span" as a guide to your observations. What are the keys to faith formation in the groups you observe?

Do the same for youth/young adult and adult classes and groups.

4. The Comprehensive Plan

The web chart B, "Comprehensive Plan for Teacher Development" is a continuum—the basic foundation to more mature development. Use the "Do No Harm" list as a baseline skills inventory for yourself. Note areas of strength and where you want to improve. Do the same for the "Do All the Good" list. Make a specific list of interim steps and skills that would take you from No Harm to All Good. Use it as a guide further development.

Do the same inventory with your teachers and group leaders to begin planning for how to help them develop their own skills further.

ADDITIONS for GROUP STUDY (Can be peer led or instructor led)

1. Suggested Readings

Divide the main texts among group members. Each person will take responsibility for developing a list of discussion points on that text and will lead the discussion at group times. Intersperse these group reading/ discussion activities among the other activities. Develop a calendar with the reading list.

2. Work with a Mentor

You might need to help each other find a mentor. Ideally, a mentor will be able to see you in action, but a mentor who serves in a coaching role can meet you by way of the telephone, Skype, or email. A mentor should be willing to learn from you as well as guide you.

As you work together, pay attention to professional development, power issues, empowering, listening, asking questions, decision making, and urges to "fix" rather than guide or lead.

3. Observe Classes

Among your peers, determine who has the best skills and experience in which age-level and plan for several of your own age-level learning times. Be frank about your own strengths and weaknesses and help each other gain skill and confidence in working with the whole age span. If the group size will permit, plan for pre-school, younger elementary, older elementary/tweens, teens, young adults, middle adults, older adults. Use the life span chart as a discussion guide

4. The Comprehensive Plan

You can use your findings from your personal inventory to do the same kind of **peer support and cross-training** as in Activity 3. Taking information from the inventories of the teachers and group leaders, plan together for a series of workshops for the skill/information sets that are the most needed. Consider swapping churches (you train my teachers, and I train yours) or partnering in training so that someone can observe you leading a workshop. After one or more workshops, debrief together.

5. Focus on Multiple Intelligences

Read *Start Here* or one of the other texts that explains MI. Think about any recent teaching or training you have led and specifically what you did. What type of intelligences did your teaching activities tap into? (There will always be at least two, because the exercise is either inter- or intra-personal, and then something else.) Your teaching/leading preferences most likely relate to your learning preferences. What does your recent teaching tell you about yourself?

Think about a teaching or training opportunity you will prepare next. Work out at least two different activities or exercises you can do for each type of intelligence then choose a balance among them for the actual event.

Share this with your mentor or accountability partner for review and discussion.

6. Employ Learning Hooks

Read about learning hooks in *Start Here*. Using all the lectionary Scriptures for each week, think what learning hooks you could employ to engage people in a learning or devotional setting. List as many different hooks as you can for each of the Scriptures. Do this over the course of a month as a personal devotional practice. Talk with your accountability partner about any new insights that emerge when you engage in your devotions this way.

Next engage your teachers and group leaders in the same exercise. Talk to them periodically after their classes or groups to find out what learning hooks are especially effective for the different age groups. Invite them to try the same process for their own devotional time.

7. Work with Curriculum

Read web article C, "Choosing Curriculum Resources." Use the worksheets on pages 7-8 to review and evaluate at least one sample of the curriculum or group resources from every age level. You will probably not have read every single resource, so enlist the aid of your teachers and group leaders. Give them copies of the article and have them evaluate whatever they are currently using. Come together for a time of review. Help others understand United Methodist theology (see Modules 2 and 4) and/or refer to the doctrinal information in the *Book of Discipline*. If you are not using UM resources, work toward that goal for all classes and groups.

5. Multiple Intelligences

Plan your group learning time (perhaps in conjunction with activities 3 and/or 4), with multiple intelligences in mind. Debrief sessions by reviewing what intelligences were used, to what effect.

Focus also on how to use MI in service to the various spiritual disciplines. Together identify at least 4 different intelligences to tap into to engage in prayer, study of the Scriptures, and other acts of devotion. Then apply MI to the practice of works of mercy; that is, service, outreach, advocacy, and so on.

Commit yourself to a number of these practices, both privately, with your respective teachers and group leaders, or community. Identify a specific period of time to experiment with various practices and then agree on a date to talk about the experience in the group. Between peer group meetings, reflect on this with your accountability partner.

6. Learning Hooks

Bring specific lessons or trainings you have conducted and/or samples of the curriculum you use for study groups for the different ages. Review them together to see the ways in which the teaching plan suggests engaging the group members. Envision how this may work in your own church. Share suggestions, tips, and questions with your group members.

Talk about how your 30 day experiment with the lectionary is going.

7. Work with Curriculum

This article also includes an outline of the necessary elements to create your own study resources. **Prepare three or four outlines of class or group lessons for different ages.** (You don't have to be expert in every age level, but do your best on your own.) Be specific enough to note learning hooks, utilize various intelligences, and vary the pace of how the session would go. Bring outlines to the group session for evaluation and discussion. Talk about what you did, why you would teach that way, what Wesleyan theology is evident, what non-print resources are used and why, and why a lesson would work for a particular age group.

8. Assess Facilities and Equipment

Read web article D, “Assess Your Facilities and Equipment.” Review what sorts of “stuff” is suggested or required in the various classes and groups. (Have teachers and group leaders help you make a list.) Compare what is suggested with what you have on hand. Use the worksheets to keep an inventory of what you have, when it was acquired, what its “shelf life” is likely to be. If supplies and equipment lag behind what is needed for an effective ministry, work with your teachers, group leaders, and other church partners (finance, trustees, council) to move toward an adequate supply. (Don’t forget the possible use of memorial money or other donations.)

9. Work with Teachers

Read web article E, “Recruiting, Nurturing, and Supporting Effective Teachers.” Ask your teachers and group leaders what was said to recruit them and also what words or phrases would describe the image they have of themselves in their role. (These are probably quite different, over all.) What does this tell you about previous teacher/leader recruitment in your church?

Find out if teachers and group leaders have a job description and a covenant agreement. (Most do not.) Ask them about their understanding of expectations (of them and for them) and how those expectations have been expressed (or not). Work together to develop a realistic set of expectations, and don’t be afraid to “raise the bar.” Then develop or adapt the covenant.

Examine the infrastructure that is in place to support the expectations you set forth. (For example, if you expect teachers to agree to training, you have to provide a way for it to happen.) Make a plan for a strong infrastructure and work with your team and/or the council to put it into place over time.

10. Write a summary paper, at least 10 typed pages.

Writing this will push you to formulate your ideas clearly and to be sure they hold together consistently. Bring together your main insights on the topics of this module, including

Give it to your accountability partner and have a conversation about it.

8. Facilities and Equipment

Your setting probably isn’t perfect, so keep track of all the glitches, hassles, and “holes” in your facilities and supply lists so that you have a picture of reality (not to complain). In the group, discuss who has what, how supplies and equipment are shared or deployed, and what other tips you have for each other. (There is more on asset identification in Module 5).

Ask your mentors to come with you to swap information about how to stretch budgets, use stuff creatively to make other stuff, raise awareness and support for the ministry, and share resources.

9. Teachers

Talk to your mentor and group members about tips for teacher/leader recruitment.

Practice deep listening and asking powerful questions. Read web articles F and G on Listening. Powerful questions require a specific answer without begging the answer, judging, fixing, directing, or evaluating. Powerful questions elicit information, ask for clarity, probe below the surface, seek alternatives and possibilities, explore barriers, and so on. Do this activity several times, in triads, so that there is an observer. This takes practice, so spend some time with it and with debriefing each practice experience.

Talk about how different churches put in place an infrastructure that supports the leaders and the plans of the church.

As needed, share information and helps for preparing and implementing job descriptions and/or covenants. This may require a “DNA” change in the congregation, so plan carefully and be patient.

10. Summary Paper

Swap your summary papers so that two other people, if possible, read papers other than their own.

You might do the review time (having read in advance) in a retreat format. Ask each other unbiased questions for clarity (meaning no leading or implying what a response should be), so that your group partners can consider their positions on their own without judgment or interference.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

1. Web articles on www.gbod.org/education (in the tab....)
 - A. “[Development Through the Life Span](#)” (chart) ([Resources for Teachers/ All teachers](#)). This can be printed as a larger chart, in two different sizes.
 - B. “[Comprehensive Plan for Teacher Development for United Methodist Congregations](#)” ([Christian Education Leaders](#))
 - C. “[Choosing Curriculum Resources](#)” ([Christian Education Leaders](#))
 - D. “[Assess Your Facilities and Equipment](#)” (Christian Education Leaders)
 - E. “[Recruiting, Nurturing, and Supporting Effective Teachers](#)” (Christian Education Leaders)
 - F. “[Listening to Teach, Speaking to Learn](#)” ([Teacher Development](#))
 - G. “[Listening: A Planning Tool for Teacher Development](#)” (Teacher Development)
 - H. “[Foundations](#)” (Christian Education Leaders)
2. *Start Here*, by Barbara Bruce (see also * *Triangular Teaching* * *Your Spiritual Brain*)
3. *Teaching the Bible to Youth and Adults*, by Dick Murray (revised and updated version)
4. *The Nuts and Bolts of Christian Education*, by Delia Halverson
5. *Ready, Set, Teach!: Training and Supporting Volunteers in Christian Education*, by Delia Halverson

WHAT’S NEXT?

To continue to explore this topic, consider these activities:

1. Consider getting coaching training, or read more about coaching, which includes asking powerful questions. *Faithful Guides*, by Thomas Hawkins is an excellent text with a faith community orientation. *Co-Active Coaching*, by Fairhurst..... is excellent as well, but from a secular approach.
2. It is impossible to learn to teach just by reading; you also need practice. If you are in need of more basic teaching experience, invite a local Christian educator to lead the course, “[Effective Teaching for Transformation](#)” (www.gbod.org/education; see DIY Training). This is a series of six 3-hour, face-to-face workshops for teacher training. Use any or all of the self-contained modules.
3. Get help, as needed, to be as “tech-savvy” as you can. Look for ways to connect your people in ministry through social media, email, web, and so on.
4. Make sure you have all the catalogues from Cokesbury and familiarize yourself with their resources, including those with the CRC insignia, ([CRC](#)) which identifies official United Methodist resources. Call 1-800-251-8591 or contact customer service cokes_serv@cokesbury.com.
5. There are many good resources on teaching and leading. Explore www.cokesbury.com and develop your own continuing education reading list.
6. Continue your reading and study of faith formation for different ages.
7. Plan for your own spiritual formation by participating in a Walk to Emmaus or an Academy for Spiritual Formation, offered through Upper Room Ministries (www.upperroom.org/programs)