If You Plan It They Will Come (and stay☺)

Tips for effective lesson planning

**THE ST. RAPHAEL STORY:**

* **PARISH SNAPSHOT**
  + Parish of 2,885 families in Oshkosh.
  + 650 religious education students grades PK-Confirmation
  + RE on two nights a week Tuesday (4:15/5:30/6:45) and Wednesday (4:15/5:30/6:45/8:00) for grades 1-Confirmation. **(see handout)**
  + PK held at 9am and 11am on Sundays (bi-weekly)
  + Approximately 70 catechists needed to minister to families from Sept-May.
  + 4 Coordinators (PK/Elementary/Middle/High School) with one doubling as CRE.
  + The CRE is full time, the other three coordinators are part time.
* **THE PROBLEM:**
  + Catechists feeling burned out and overwhelmed with planning and preparing own lessons so our retention rate was low.
  + Kids not engaged as catechists “fell back” on reading out of the book, and this impacted behavior.
* **THE SOLUTION:**
  + Summer of 2014: Write lesson plans for grades 1-8 that accompany the Christ our Life Series. This was done by coordinators and parishioners who were trained teachers.
  + High School Lessons were written in Summer of 2015
  + Lessons highlight important points in the manual and integrate media and hands on activities beyond what is in the catechist guide.
  + All materials prepared for catechists ahead of time and placed in rooms for when they arrive.
* **THE RESULT:**
  + 90% retention of catechists
  + Increase in catechist confidence and investment
  + Reduction in negative students behaviors
  + Higher student engagement, which creates happy little disciples who WANT to be there.
  + Higher parent satisfaction and involvement.

**HOW TO GET STARTED: A STEP BY STEP PLAN**

1. **GETTING STARTED** 
   1. Create an outline and plan which lesson will be addressed by each grade at your religious education sessions. **(See handout)**
   2. Go through the lessons in the manual and assign them to each of the dates on your outline.
2. **WRITING THE LESSONS (See handouts)**
   1. Establish a goal or faith focus for each lesson. This is often stated in the teacher manual.
   2. List materials needed. This will make immediate preparation during the year easy.
   3. Establish a consistent format for the lesson plans. **YOU WILL NEED A LESSON PLANNING SCHEMA.** This will help orientate catechists and students.
      1. Centering, Sharing, Acting, Closing **Prayer**
      2. Engage, Explore, Respond, Closing **Prayer**
   4. Go through each lesson that you plan to cover in the manual.
      1. **Cut out** a lot of teacher talk and replace with activities or other media. Write those changes into your lesson plan.
      2. Don’t be afraid to make changes. Stick with the **key points** of the faith focus.
   5. Have an **organized** way of storing your lesson electronically. (A folder for each grade with the lesson listed.)
3. **CREATE A LESSON PLAN FOLDER** 
   1. Outline of the year
   2. Lesson plans
   3. Samples of handouts
   4. Any permanent media they will be using
4. **IMPLEMENTATION**
   1. Be sure to **orientate your catechists** to the lesson plan format at the in service. This can be done in several ways
      1. Walk through the lesson
      2. Teach a mock lesson so they can see it in action
      3. Have them go through a lesson with a grade level partner and write down questions.
5. **CATECHIST SUPPORT** 
   1. Assure them any changes to the lesson schedule will be communicated at least two weeks in advance.
   2. Stress they are **NOT** teaching out of the book.
   3. Stress all materials will be provided for them.
   4. Assure if they want to add and an activity or supplement what is in the lesson that is fine as long as it fits the faith focus.
   5. Support catechists throughout the year and provide continued training.

**CAN YOU DO THIS? YES YOU CAN!**