

**Archdiocese of Milwaukee
Office of Catechesis & Youth Ministry**

**Grades K-8 Catechetical Program Inventory
2013-2014**

The Office of Catechesis and Youth Ministry of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee conducted a survey of parish religious education programs during May-June 2014. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on what our parishes are doing in the way of catechesis, sacramental preparation and youth ministry. Information will be used to identify trends, to review and update policies, to plan resources and professional development, and to share with parishes for their own assessment and planning.

Two questionnaires were developed--one for programs for grades K-8 and one for programs for grades 9-12. This document reports on the responses to the K-8 survey.

Responses were received for 130 of 202 parishes--a 64 percent response rate. These responses came from 110 catechetical leaders, several of whom serve more than one parish. They identified themselves by name, title, and parish(es) served. This document reports on their responses to the survey questions.¹

Position titles

32 respondents (29%) said their job title was Director of Religious Education (DRE), the most frequent title. Other common titles included Director of Child Ministry (12), Director of Faith Formation or Life Long Faith Formation (12), Director of Christian Formation (11). All respondents answered this question.

Areas of responsibility

Almost two-thirds of respondents identified grades K-5 and 6-8 catechesis as well as sacramental preparation in their areas of responsibility. Respondents were asked to check all the areas that applied.

Area of responsibility	# of responses	% of responses
K-5 catechesis	93	85%
Sacramental preparation	86	78%
6-8 catechesis	82	75%
9-12 catechesis	51	46%
Confirmation preparation	47	43%
Youth ministry	40	36%

Other areas identified by several respondents included adult formation, intergenerational programs, and the catechumenate.

¹ The responses in this report will not all add to 110 because: (1) many questions asked respondents to check all areas that applied; and (2) not all responded to all questions or all parts of a question. Responses are often reported in order of magnitude, not necessarily in the order listed in the questionnaire. Percentages are rounded, and so sometimes do not total 100%.

Collaboration among parishes

Respondents were asked whether they were responsible for catechetical programs in one parish only or for joint or collaborative programs with more than one parish. More than one in four respondents (28%) were involved in a collaborative program with more than one parish.² Fourteen respondents were involved in 2-parish arrangements, 15 in 3-parish arrangements.

Parish collaboration	# of responses	% of responses
Responsible for one parish only	79	71%
Responsible for joint/collaborative programs in more than one parish	33	30%
Collaborate with a staff person from another parish on a joint program	14	13%

Total Respondents: 111

Full or part time position

When asked if their position was full or part-time, almost three-quarters of the respondents (72%) reported holding full time positions; 27% were part-time.

Models of religious education

When asked to indicate what models of religious education they used and to check all that applied, over 80 percent said they used a weekly catechetical program. Less than 50 percent of the respondents reported using any other models listed for their consideration.

Models of religious education	# of responses	% of responses
Weekly catechetical program	85	83%
Summer vacation bible school	38	34%
RCIA for children	26	25%
Family-centered program	24	24%
Home schooling religious education	17	17%
Lectionary-based program	16	16%
Intergenerational program	16	16%
Mini-course program	8	8%
Catechesis of Good Shepherd	6	6%
Summer catechetical program	6	6%
Programs for children with special needs	4	4%

Total Respondents: 102

Number of participants in catechetical programs

Respondents were asked for a count of participants in their programs, by grade level. The total numbers for each grade level is shown in the chart below.³ The total number of participants in K-8 programs varies greatly, from one parish total of 25 to another parish with 645 participants.

Grades	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
Total # participants	953	1857	2316	1588	1441	1487	1374	1336	1399
Program size	0-45	0-105	1-125	1-87	0-75	1-61	1-50	0-90	0-75
# of responses	78	85	85	85	86	86	84	81	79

² To explain the 28 percent reference, note that 72 percent of respondents indicated they were responsible for one parish only; respondents could and did respond positively to both other alternatives.

³ Not all respondents answered the question and some did not report participants at every grade level.

Annual contact hours

Grades	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th
Average contact hours	22	26	27	26	26	26	27	28	27
Range of hours	1 - 70	1 - 70	1-70	1 - 56	1-56	1-70	1-70	1-70	1-55
Median	24	26	28	27	27	27	28	28	28
# of respondents	81	89	89	86	87	87	85	79	81

Catechetical textbooks/series used

Respondents were asked what textbook or series they used for 1st-6th grade catechesis. Parishes reported using 10 different series by the major Catholic publishers. A few do not use a basal series, but use other published materials or produce their own. The most frequently reported textbook series were: *Blest Are We*, RCL Benziger, 2002 (16% of respondents); *We Believe*, William H. Sadlier, Inc, 2004, 2011 (14%), and *Call to Faith* (K-6), Harcourt (Our Sunday Visitor Curriculum), 2005, 2009(13%). 91 respondents answered this question.

There was even greater diversity at the junior high level, with 12 different textbooks or published programs used, along with supplemental and locally produced materials. The most commonly used textbooks were *Catholic Connections for Middle Schoolers*, Saint Mary's Press, 2009, 2014 (11%), *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies with What the Church Believes and Teaches Handbook*, 2010 (10%), *Finding God* (7-8), Loyola Press, 2007, 2014 (9%), *Call to Faith* (7-8), Harcourt/OSV Curriculum, 2007 (9%), *Blest Are We* (7-8), RCL Benziger, 2003, 2010 (9%), and *We Live Our Faith* (7-8), William H. Sadlier, 2007 (8%). The total number of respondents was 79.

There was little consensus on materials for kindergarten programs. The most commonly used textbooks were: *God Loves Us / God Made Everything* series (3, 4, K), Loyola Press, 2008, 2010 (11%), *I am Special* (3, 4, and K), Our Sunday Visitor, 2007-2009 (11%), *Pflaum Gospel Weeklies*, Pflaum Publishing, 2010 (11%), *We Believe* (K-6), William H. Sadlier, Inc., 2004, 2011 (10%), *Blest Are We*, RCL Benziger, 2002, 2004, 2008 (8%), *Christ Our Life* (K-8), Loyola Press, 2002, 2009 (8%), *Call to Faith* (K-6), Harcourt/OSV Curriculum, 2005, 2009 (7%), *Stories of God's Love* (3,4, 5, and K), RCL Benziger, 2009, 2011 (7%), *Allelu! Growing and Celebrating with Jesus* (3, 4, 5K), Our Sunday Visitor, 2010, 2011, 2012 (6%), and *Creemos/We Believe* (K-6), William H. Sadlier, Inc. 2005, 2011 (6%). The total number of respondents was 72.

Class times

Respondents were asked when they held classes. The largest number held classes on a Sunday Morning (75%), followed by Weekday evening (55%).⁴

When classes are held	# of respondents	% of respondents
Sunday morning	77	75%
Weekday evening	57	55%
Sunday evening	14	14%
After school	8	8%
Summer weekdays	8	8%
Saturday morning	6	6%

Total Respondents: 103

⁴ Numbers add up to more than 100% because some parishes offer one class schedule for lower grades and another for upper grades, and some offer more than one class option.

Scheduling alternatives

When asked if they offered more than one scheduling option for a particular level, 39 percent said yes; 59 percent said no.

Parent involvement

When asked how they involved parents in catechetical programs, most indicated they use take-home materials.

Methods of parent involvement	# of responses	% of responses
Take-home materials	86	86%
Special programs for parents	59	59%
Work with children in the classroom	42	42%
Intergenerational sessions	36	36%

Total Respondents: 100

"Other" opportunities included parent/child retreat, pizza and movie nights, "breakfast in Bethlehem," adult education at same time as children's class, and emails to parents.

Annual fees

Respondents were asked what they charge for their religious education programs.

	One child	Two children	Three children	Maximum
Lowest fee	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Highest fee	\$175	\$330	\$495	\$1000
Average fee	\$88	\$145	\$191	\$215
Median fee	\$90	\$150	\$170	\$193

Assessments

Respondents were asked what assessments they use. A majority of respondents, 55 percent, said they use tests provide by their textbook publisher.

Assessment	# of responses	% of responses
Tests provided by textbook publisher	55	55%
Archdiocesan Religious Assessments	40	40%
None	19	19%
NCEA's ACRE	0	0%
Other	10	10%

Total Respondents: 100

Some respondents who answered "other" noted that catechists developed their own assessments.

Programs for children with special needs

Respondents were asked to describe their programs, if any, for children with special needs.

Response to Special Needs	# of responses
Special program (SPRED, Vine & Branches, ARISE, Journey, Risen)	15
Mainstream children with extra assistance from catechists or aides	6
Catechist or tutor works one-on-one or in special group	4
Treat each child and situation individually as needed	4

39 respondents answered this question.

One program is conducted in American Sign Language and is exclusively for deaf students. Several respondents said they employ multiple approaches, depending on the particular needs.

Summer vacation bible school

50 respondents indicated they planned to hold a summer vacation bible school in 2014. Most programs began with 4K or 5K and included children to 5th grade (29 respondents) A few included older participants. Almost all respondents used published VBS materials.

Sacramental preparation - number of participants

Respondents were asked how many participants they had for preparation for First Communion and First Reconciliation and RCIA for children.

Program	First Communion	First Reconciliation	RCIA for children
Smallest class	2	2	1
Largest class	158	158	27
Average	41	41	3
Total	3791	3799	219
# of respondents	93	92	76

Sacramental preparation – program elements included

Respondents were also asked what program elements were included in their Sacramental programs. Parent sessions received the largest number of mentions with 64 percent.

Sacramental programs	# of responses	% of responses
Parent sessions	74	76%
At home work	74	76%
Integration with religious ed or school classes	71	73%
Retreat day	71	73%
Parent-child sessions	53	55%
Special sessions for the children	29	30%

Total Respondents: 97

Textbooks used for Sacramental preparation

Respondents were asked to indicate what textbooks they used for First Reconciliation, First Communion and RCIA for children.

In response to the question for First Reconciliation in Grade 2, only one text was used by more than 10 respondents: *God's Gift - Reconciliation*, Loyola Press, 2009, was indicated by 21 respondents. Nine other published texts were also reported. Some respondents said they used locally prepared or customized materials; others simply used the grade-level religion textbook. 81 respondents answered this question.

When asked about textbooks for First Reconciliation for older children, 8 different published texts were reported, as well as "other" locally developed materials, with no one text used by more than 10 respondents. 52 respondents answered this question.

When asked about textbooks for First Communion preparation for grade 2, two text books was used by 10 or more respondents: *God's Gift-Eucharist*, Loyola Press, 2009 (22) and *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise*, RCL Benziger, 2006 (13). Nine other published texts were also reported. Some respondents said they used locally prepared or customized materials; others used the grade-level religion textbook. 83 respondents answered this question.

Regarding textbooks for First Communion for older children, 10 different published texts were reported, as well as locally developed materials, with one textbook used by 11 respondents, *Eucharist: We Give Thanks and Praise* (intermediate), RCL Benziger, 2006.

There was no consensus among the 30 respondents who reported on material they used for RCIA for children. Responses included several different texts that present a summary of the Catholic faith, a pamphlet series, and adaptation of grade-level materials.

Sacramental preparation fee

Respondents were asked about fees they charge for sacramental preparation. 37% had no fee for First Reconciliation preparation; 21% had no charge for First Communion preparation. Only 11 respondents reported having a fee for RCIA for children. The chart below reports on those who charge fees for sacramental preparation.

	First Reconciliation	First Communion	RCIA for children
# that charge a fee	56	69	11
Lowest fee	\$5	\$7	\$25
Highest fee	\$135	\$135	\$80
Average fee	\$35	\$25	\$52
Median fee	\$15	\$25	\$50

Catechists - demographics

Respondents were asked how many catechists they have, how many have completed training for basic religious education certification, and their years of service. Respondents reported numbers ranging from 2 to 57 catechists. 67 respondents indicated they had one or more certified catechists.

Total number of catechists reported	1658	
Number with certification	362 ⁵	22%
Number with 0-5 years of service	886	53%
Number with over 5 years of service	668	40%

Catechists - formation

Respondents were asked what kind of formation they provide for their catechists. Individual orientation was most often mentioned (81% of respondents). Over half also used in-service training, sharing reading materials, and catechist group sharing.

Formation opportunities	# of responses	% of response
Individual orientation	81	81%
In-service training	71	71%
Sharing reading materials	70	70%
Catechist group sharing	53	53%
Speakers/adult education	47	47%
Funding to attend conferences/courses	45	45%
District catechist day	31	31%
Forming the Catechetical Spirit program	26	26%
Mentor program	13	13%
Echoes of Faith	10	10%

Total Respondents: 100

Adults serving in religious education program

Respondents were asked in what ways adults serve in their religious education program other than as catechists.

Service	# of responses	% of responses
Substitute catechists	84	85%
Catechist aides	68	69%
Office assistants	46	46%
Presenters on special topics	39	39%
Craft and project assistants	39	39%
Hall monitors and greeters	37	37%
Special event team	35	35%
Field Trip Chaperone	31	31%
Assistants for children with special needs	19	19%
Set up/equipment assistants	17	17%

Total Respondents: 99

Individual respondents added: cooking for intergenerational program, assist with evening Masses and stations of the cross drama, gym monitor, and parking lot attendant.

⁵ Several reported they did not know how many of their catechists were certified.