

Forming Disciples

Diocese of Buffalo Faith Formation Curriculum Guide



Grades Pre-K to 8

This curriculum looks at the six tasks of catechesis as six key elements of lived Catholic life so as to help young disciples in formation to realize the intimate connection between our Catholic faith and life. These six key elements of Catholic life “constitute a unified whole by which catechesis seeks to achieve its objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ.” (GDC nos. 85-86; NDC no. 20)

**Diocese of Buffalo
Department of Lifelong Faith Formation
Catholic Schools Office**

September 2016

Putting adults, youth, and children in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ through lifelong catechesis for discipleship in and through the Catholic Church.



DIOCESE OF BUFFALO
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DECREE

To the Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Buffalo:

It is my pleasure to approve and promulgate the Diocesan Elementary Faith Formation Curriculum Guide, *Forming Disciples*, within the Diocese of Buffalo. The purpose of this guide is to provide a consistent set of standards to be incorporated into Parish and Catholic schools programs through which children, families, and entire parish communities can be formed in their knowledge and practices of their faith as disciples of Jesus Christ.

This Guide reflects the collaboration with staff of the Archdiocese of Washington and significant work on the part of pastors, parish catechetical leaders, principals, and diocesan staff of the Departments of Lifelong Faith Formation and Catholic Schools. I am grateful to all of those who have dedicated much effort to this project and to those who took the time to share their insights in the consultative process which led to this work.

This Guide becomes effective on September 18, 2016, Catechetical Sunday, and will be implemented in all parishes September 1, 2017. Any alteration and/or interpretation of this Guide is the sole responsibility of the Diocese of Buffalo.

This document represents a timely response to the challenges of our current times in light of the best research and contemporary documents of our Church. It is my hope that it will serve as a tool to truly transform parish life through collaboration within and between ministries and parishes.

Given this fifteenth day of August, two thousand, sixteen, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the Diocese of Buffalo.

Most Reverend Richard J. Malone
Bishop of Buffalo

Rev. Msgr. Paul A. Litwin
Chancellor

Forming Disciples

Table of Contents

Inside Cover

Decree

Table of Contents.....	i
------------------------	---

Acknowledgements	iii
------------------------	-----

Abbreviations	vi
---------------------	----

Introduction

▪ A Significant Change	1
▪ Aim of This Guide.....	2
▪ Faith Formation Standards	3
▪ The Design of This Guide	6
▪ What Is Meant by a Standards-Based Curriculum?.....	7
▪ What is a Spiral Scope and Sequence?.....	7
▪ Who Has A Role In Effective Evangelization & Catechesis.....	9
▪ Parish Implementation Guidelines.....	13
▪ Expectations for Our Adults, Youth and Children with Special Needs	15

How to Read the Following Charts	16
--	----

Diocesan Faith Formation Standards and Indicators (subsections)

Key Element I: Knowledge of the Faith: What We Believe

Standard 1 *Creed*

Standard 2 *Sacred Scripture*

Key Element II: Sacraments and Liturgy: How We Celebrate

Standard 3 *Sacraments*

Standard 4 *Liturgy*

Key Element III: Morality: How We Live

Standard 5 *Conscience*

Standard 6 *Christian Living*

Key Element IV: Prayer: How We Pray

Standard 7 *Prayer*

Forming Disciples

**Key Element V: Education for Living in the Christian Community:
How We Live in the Community, the Church**

Standard 8 *Catholic Church*

Standard 9 *Ecumenism*

Standard 10 *Catholic Principles and Relationships*

Standard 11 *Vocation*

**Key Element VI: Evangelization and Apostolic Life:
How We, as Individuals and Community,
Live in Service to the World**

Standard 12 *Catholic Social Teaching*

Standard 13 *Inter-Religious Dialogue*

Standard 14 *Missionary Vocation*

AppendicesA-1

Appendix #1: **Family Faith Formation.....A-3**

Appendix #2: **Intergenerational Faith Formation.....A-31**

Appendix #3: **Middle School Catechesis/Youth Ministry.....A-41**

Supplemental Materials

Parent Guides to Forming Disciples

by Grade Level

Scope & Sequence Charts

Forming Disciples

Acknowledgements

Developing *Forming Disciples* is a work of great love and commitment to the Catholic Church of Buffalo to witness and teach the good news of Jesus Christ as articulated in the Scriptures and in the teachings of the Church.

There are many people to thank for the accomplishment of this project.

The people listed below have made particular contributions to the development, reviewing and editing of the document.

Author and General Editor:

- Dr. Harry J. Dudley, Director of Religious Education, Archdiocese of Washington

Special Thanks:

- The Archdioceses of Washington and Chicago for permission to build on the firm foundation of their curricula and to use elements of each of their curricula in creating this new Diocesan Forming Disciples Curriculum Guide.
- Scripture quotations contained herein are adapted from the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, Copyright 1946, 1952, 1971, and the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible, Copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

Lifelong Faith Formation & Catholic Schools Office Administration Staff Support:

The staff support for this project included:

- **Sr. Carol Cimino, SSJ, Superintendent, Catholic Schools Office**
- **Mary Beth Coates, Director, Lifelong Faith Formation**
- Paula Penepent, Coordinator for the Catechumenate
- Maureen Poulin, Associate Director, Lifelong Faith Formation
- Elizabeth Santini, Administrative Assistant, Lifelong Faith Formation
- Sr. Barbara Schiavoni, GNSH, Associate Director, Lifelong Faith Formation
- Mario Vinti, Associate Director, Lifelong Faith Formation

Forming Disciples

The Task Force Members: The following persons served on Faith Formation Curriculum Task Forces:

Home/Family

Mary Pat Bonnes-Sacred Heart, Bowmansville
Sr. Therese Chmura, CSSF,-St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster
Mary Frances McCrory-St. Rose of Lima, Buffalo
Sue Ann Salterelli-St. Francis Assisi, Tonawanda
Karen Smazniak-St. Mary, Swormville
Roberta Spencer-SS. Peter & Paul, Williamsville
John Wilde-Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Harris Hill

Intergenerational

Lisa Benzer-St. Vincent, Spring Brook
Judy Bradley-St. Joseph, Fredonia
Susan Galley-Holy Trinity, Dunkirk
Chris Hanley-St. Benedict, Eggerstville
Maureen Rademaker-Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Harris Hill
Joan Rischmiller-St. Gregory the Great, Williamsville

Middle School

Betsy Amico-Queen of Martyrs, West Seneca
Becky Cambria-Christ the King, Snyder
Carolyn Grassmick-Youth & Young Adult Ministry, Diocese of Buffalo
Mary Ann Hebert-St. Joseph, Gowanda
Adam Jarosz-St. Gregory the Great, Williamsville
Barbara Manley-St. John Paul II, LakeView
Mary Frances McCrory-St. Rose of Lima, Buffalo
Sr. Catherine Taberski-St. Martha, Depew
Stephanie Williams-St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

Post Baptism

Mary Barone-Nativity of Our Lord, Orchard Park
Mark Bialkowski-St. Mary of the Lake, Hamburg
Dcn. Carl Koester-SS. Peter & Paul, Hamburg
Chris and Anne Marie Duquin-St. Gregory the Great, Williamsville
Mary Kennedy-St. Martin of Tours, Buffalo
Jennifer Lang-St. Paul, Kenmore
Margaret Seraphin-Church of the Annunciation, Elma

Catholic Schools SS. Peter & Paul School, Williamsville

Allison Andrews – 1st grade Religion teacher
Denise Amato – Religion Coordinator & 6th-8th grade Religion teacher
Michele Dernbach - Kdg Religion teacher
Pamela Griffasi – 3rd grade Religion teacher
Karin Kaye – Kdg Religion teacher
Melissa Nigro – 2nd grade Religion teacher
Erika Rohrbacher - 1st grade Religion teacher

Forming Disciples

Carol Quinn – 5th grade Religion teacher
Candace Zuccaro – 4th grade Religion teacher

Reviewers:

Rev. Peter Karalus
Rev. Jeffrey Nowak

Forming Disciples

Abbreviations

Used in this Introduction and the Curriculum Standards and Indicators:

CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
GDC	General Directory for Catechesis
NDC	National Directory for Catechesis
CT	Catechesi Tradendae (On Catechesis in Our Time)
Compendium	Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church
USCCA	United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

Forming Disciples

Introduction

A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the ages. (Mt. 28:19-20)

Forming Disciples is the faith formation curriculum guidelines for use in parishes and Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Buffalo. Its intended audience is children of elementary school age, however, these guidelines are easily adapted for use in multi-age, family, and intergenerational models of parish faith formation programs.

This document was originally created by the Archdiocese of Washington, DC. The Diocese of Buffalo entered into a licensing agreement with the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. to receive permission to adopt *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization* and adapt it for local use. This document has been reviewed by the Archdiocese of Washington for compliance with the License Agreement and all adaptations have been accepted. In addition, Bishop Richard J. Malone, Bishop of Buffalo, has approved this document for use in Catholic schools beginning September 2016, and for use in parishes in September 2017.

The guidelines are based on the pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and organized by the six key elements of Catholic life (also known as the *six tasks of catechesis*) as outlined in the *National Directory for Catechesis*. This practical tool for parish and school catechesis establishes consistent content for the teaching of the faith across the Diocese to help ensure that all generations of Catholics are well formed and know the truth that Jesus taught us. The standards identify what those who participate in parish and Catholic elementary school faith formation programs should **know, understand** and **do** at each age/grade level.

These guidelines have, as their primary audience, young people and their families. Parishes and schools will, together, develop concrete strategies to actively engage with families and the parish community. This is also a tool with which parish catechetical leaders, in close collaboration with other leaders in the parish (such as: school principal, youth ministry leaders, coordinators of RCIA and baptism, outreach ministers, prolife and special needs advocates, and, of course the pastor and other clergy in leadership) will create a parish-wide catechetical plan. Parishes are urged to use this guide for planning across parish ministries and resist the practice which may keep the parish faith formation program a child-centered program isolated from the center of parish life. There are countless opportunities to connect the standards and learning indicators across parish life and in way that will involve families and encourage regular religious practice across the generations. These guidelines, with appropriate adaptations, will also guide engagement of families and the parish with the catechumenate for children.

Forming Disciples

The scope and sequence of the curriculum guide is *spiral* in its approach which means that each theme is repeated annually with differing learning indicators dependent upon age-range. This creates endless opportunities for the whole parish to align learning and formation with the standards of “Forming Disciples” and further immerse our households in faith growth in a variety of settings.

Forming Disciples is a guide that encourages and deepens evangelization because the elements, standards, and indicators contribute to an improved appreciation and experience of the:

- Sunday Eucharist as source and summit of Christian life;
- intimate connection between faith and life;
- dignity of the human person and the gift of human relationships;
- social teaching of the church;
- and the role of the Church in continuing the ministry of Jesus.

AIM OF THIS GUIDE

The primary aim of this guide is to support integrated planning and preparation across all sectors of the church, including parishes, schools and families (i.e. households of faith). This will be done as a part of a diocesan-wide effort to strengthen the teaching of the faith for adults, youth and children and the integral connection between evangelization and catechesis. This process will accompany the entire local church (not just children) in the lifelong journey of faith and discipleship.

These guidelines focus on the need for mutual collaboration, communication and consultation. They strive to clarify the roles, responsibilities and mutual accountabilities needed by pastors, families, catechetical leaders and all who assist efforts to invite adults, youth and children into an authentic encounter with Jesus Christ through lifelong catechesis in and through the Catholic Church.

Forming Disciples

FAITH FORMATION STANDARDS

The chart on the following pages lists the faith formation standards. It shows the strong relationship between the pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the key elements of Catholic life and the Diocese of Buffalo standards.

These standards form the foundation of the curriculum, shaping its direction. As with other types of standards and goals, they are learned and integrated over time. *Forming Disciples* goals invite and challenge the learner to understand the meaning of discipleship and respond to the call of discipleship through full participation in the life of the Church. “The sacred duty and the joy of each succeeding generation of Christian believers have been to hand on the deposit of faith that was first entrusted to the apostles by Christ himself. We have received this gift, the deposit of faith – we have not conceived it. It is the heritage of the whole Church. It is our privilege and our responsibility to preserve the memory of Christ’s words and the words themselves and to teach future generations of believers to carry out all that Christ commanded his apostles.” (NDC no. 26)

Forming Disciples

Pillars of the Catechism	Key Elements of Catholic Life	Faith Formation Curriculum Standards (<i>in light of the NDC and USCCA</i>)
Creed – <i>What We Believe</i>	I. Knowledge of Faith	1. CREED: Understand, believe and proclaim the triune and redeeming God as revealed in creation and human experience, in Apostolic Tradition and Sacred Scripture, and as entrusted to the teaching office of the Church. (NDC nos. 16C, 25-26) 2. SACRED SCRIPTURE: Read, comprehend and articulate salvation history as conveyed in God’s revelation through Sacred Scripture. (NDC nos. 18, 24)
Sacraments – <i>How We Celebrate</i>	II. Liturgy and Sacraments	3. SACRAMENTS: Understand and participate in the sacraments of the Church as effective signs of God's grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church. (GDC no. 85, NDC nos. 35-36) 4. LITURGY: Understand and celebrate the liturgical rites of the Church as expressed in the church year and celebrated in the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life. (NDC nos. 32-34, 37-39)
Christian Living – <i>How We Live</i>	III. Morality	5. CONSCIENCE: Develop a moral conscience informed by Church teachings. (NDC nos. 20.3, 36B.1-2, 42) 6. CHRISTIAN LIVING: Understand and live the moral teachings of the Church through a life of discipleship in Jesus Christ expressed in love for God, conversion, positive self-image, personal integrity, social justice, the dignity of the human person and love of neighbor. (NDC nos. 42, 44, 45, 46)
Prayer – <i>How We Pray</i>	IV. Prayer	7. PRAYER: Know and participate in the Catholic tradition of prayer and acknowledge prayer as the primary way we deepen our knowledge of God in the community. (NDC nos. 20, 34, 38)

Forming Disciples

Pillars of the Catechism	Key Elements of Catholic Life	Faith Formation Curriculum Standards (<i>in light of the NDC and USCCA</i>)
<p>Christian Living – <i>How We Live in the Community, the Church</i></p>	<p>V. Education for Living in the Christian Community</p>	<p>8. CATHOLIC CHURCH: Understand and appreciate the mystery of the Church, the Body of Christ, the community of believers, as expressed in the Church’s origin, mission of evangelization, hierarchical structure, marks, charisms, members and the communion of saints. (NDC nos. 25D, 28, 29)</p> <p>9. ECUMENISM: Understand and participate in the call of the Church to be a sign of unity in the world through knowledge of and collaboration with other Catholic (Eastern), Orthodox, and Christian churches. (NDC no. 51A-C)</p> <p>10. CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES AND RELATIONSHIPS: Apply Catholic principles to interpersonal relations. (NDC nos. 25H, 29, 41-45)</p> <p>11. VOCATION: Understand and undertake discipleship in Christ as a response of faith within the mission of the Church by living a specific call in the life of the Church. (GDC nos. 27, 56, 228, 229, 230, 255, 261; NDC nos. 29C-H, pp. 100-101, 104)</p>
<p>Christian Living – <i>How We, as Individuals and Community, Live in Service to the World</i></p>	<p>VI. Evangelization and Apostolic Life</p>	<p>12. CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: Know, critique and apply social justice and stewardship principles to societal situations in a way that acknowledges and affirms the dignity of the human person and community. (NDC nos. 25H, 29A-C,H, 41-46)</p> <p>13. INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: Understand and participate in the call of the Church to be a sign of unity in the world through knowledge of and collaboration with Jews, Muslims, and all faith traditions. (NDC nos. 51D-E,52)</p> <p>14. MISSIONARY VOCATION: Demonstrate an appreciation for Catholic missionary and evangelization efforts through our parish community, its culture, worship, sacramental life and service. (NDC nos. 25H-I, 29A-C, G-H, 41-46)</p>

Forming Disciples

THE DESIGN OF THIS GUIDE

In order for *Forming Disciples* to be implemented well it needs to be viewed as a “learning-centered” curriculum: the design is focused on the participant learning process and outcomes. Parish and Catholic school catechetical leaders plan strategies around how to effectively help the participant to understand and internalize the message. They do this by asking and answering three questions in the order given below.

- 1. What is the intended learning?**
(**Outcome/objective:** What should the participants know, understand and be able to do and state as observable behavior? Use an action verb.)
- 2. What opportunities need to be provided to help the participants be ready to effectively demonstrate the evidence of their learning?**
(**Strategies:** What teaching and learning activities, resources, field trips, etc., will help to provide the knowledge, skills, and understanding of the outcome so that the participants will be able to give evidence of the learning asked for in the assessments designed?)
- 3. What will be the evidence that participants can do it?**
(**Assessment:** What will participants do to demonstrate that they acquired and can use the knowledge, skill and understanding of the outcome?)

The *Forming Disciples* Curriculum provides the starting and ending answers for questions 1 and 3. Parish and Catholic school catechetical leaders within their parish communities will develop strategies, programs, activities, and lessons and curate appropriate resources to engage families and provide opportunities for participants to obtain specific knowledge and skills through the year. The standards and indicators will help them to develop these intermediate strategies.

Standards

As outlined above, the **standards** form the foundation of the Diocesan *Forming Disciples* Curriculum Guide. Because of their significance, the standards are repeated for every grade level with indicators developed for each standard. The **indicators** directly support learning aspects of the standard at developmentally appropriate times. As with any standard in a curriculum, the developmental level of the student determines how deeply a goal can be understood or interpreted in light of the indicators.

Indicators

Indicators, also called learning outcomes, state what a participant needs to be able to do or to understand. The indicators for each of the standards are measurable. In *Forming Disciples*, the indicators describe the basic content for each grade level, providing a major reference to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The underlined terms in the outcomes are key concepts/vocabulary. The references from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* are

Forming Disciples

essential resources for the parish and school catechist for background knowledge for effective student achievement of the indicators. As well as serve as resources for aligning adult faith formation across the parish setting. The “Connections” column contains some liturgical year/event connections to indicators and space for parishes to add in their own parish events/activities as well.

- **Bold print** indicates core indicators that must be covered in both parish and school programs.
- *Italicized print* indicates that the standard is not core material but introductory or enrichment material that may have already been mentioned elsewhere or may be repeated again. It should only be covered if there is sufficient time.

Forming Disciples

WHAT IS MEANT BY A STANDARDS–BASED CURRICULUM?

In the field of education, a *standard* is a term which defines a cumulative body of knowledge and set of competencies that is the basis for quality education. Standards express what all program participants should know and be able to do, but do not dictate how they are to be taught.

Importance of Having Diocesan Standards for *Forming Disciples*: Setting Diocesan standards allows for equal opportunity in our parish and Catholic school programs. First, all program participants are compared to the same standards. Second, when Diocesan standards are set, it is clear what everyone in programs should know and be able to do at each level of their faith formation.

Advantages of Setting Standards: Setting standards is an important and effective learning tool because standards express clear expectations of what knowledge of the faith and what skills and practices of living the faith should be shared and learned.

This can help the different partners involved in the process of not only teaching but forming the faith: the Diocese, parents/guardians, the catechetical leaders in our parish and Catholic school programs, catechists, and program participants.

WHAT IS A SPIRAL SCOPE AND SEQUENCE?

Scope and sequence is the organized framework or system under which the teachings of the faith are presented to a learner. This framework follows a certain sequence of ideas, one after the other, that stays within a certain scope of topics and themes. By giving it this order, an understanding of the teaching of the Church and faith practices may be optimized..

A spiral scope and sequence is one in which the learner returns to each topic each year, in spiral fashion, always in age appropriate language and presentation methods. By using a spiral, all the participants in a single parish or school can be learning the same theme at the same time, making catechist preparation, parent involvement, intergenerational learning and cross curricular teaching much more possible.

In summary, *Forming Disciples* is:

- standards-based,
- tied to its own assessment to promote greater accountability, and
- spiral in its approach to scope and sequence.

Forming Disciples

WHO HAS A ROLE IN EFFECTIVE EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS

Everyone Involved Has Responsibilities: Effective catechesis is done best in partnership by all who have roles and with clear expectations of the partners. Particular to the context for this document, *Forming Disciples*, the process of faith formation is seen through the lens of a partnership with families.

Parents contribute to the spiritual growth of their children by nurturing their intellectual, emotional, and physical growth. At baptism, the parish community promises to assist parents in this role (GDC no. 221). Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God (CCC no. 2226).

The family is the first place where faith is learned, lived, and interpreted (GDC nos. 226-227). Parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith and are the first people to teach their children about faith (NDC pg. 101). Parents and the parish, though, have different, but complementary roles and responsibilities in the formation of children.

The religious behavior of the parents, whatever it may be, is an accurate predictor of the religious behavior of their children. When the parish sees parents as partners and seeks to serve the needs of families, the formation of the entire household of faith is enriched.

The home must continue to be the place where we learn to appreciate the meaning and beauty of the faith, to pray and to serve our neighbor...Faith is God's gift, received in baptism, and not our own work, yet parents are the means that God uses for it to grow and develop. (Amoris Laetitia, 287)

In support of a comprehensive approach for faith formation that is lifelong, what follows is a listing of those involved in the catechetical enterprise and general expectations of each:

Diocesan Leadership:

The Central Administrative Offices of the Diocese of Buffalo exist to be of service to the parishes and other Catholic entities within the diocese. It is the purpose of the Division of Evangelization and Catechesis, in general, and the Department of Lifelong Faith Formation specifically, to help parishes assess, plan, and implement dynamic methods of faith formation for Catholics of all ages in partnership with the Department of Catholic Schools, who provide leadership with the Catholic Schools of the diocese. Therefore, the diocese promises:

- ✓ To utilize resources at the diocesan level to accomplish responsibilities that enhances the total catechetical mission of the local church.
- ✓ To support pastors in establishing effective catechetical ministry at all levels.
- ✓ To provide for the professional development of catechetical leaders and catechists.
- ✓ To develop and administer certification guidelines and programs that promote effective catechetical leadership.
- ✓ To curate and share resources to assist parish and school catechists to grow as disciples and effectively implement “Forming Disciples - the Faith Formation Curriculum Guide of the Diocese of Buffalo”.

Forming Disciples

- ✓ To provide enrichment opportunities that assist catechetical leaders, principals, and parish and school catechists to deepen their spirituality and grow in their vocation as witnesses and ministers of the Word.

Pastors and Parish Catechetical Leaders:

The Pastor is the chief catechist of the parish. His active support for the catechesis of children and adults lays a lasting foundation for parish growth and vitality.

- ✓ Employ qualified and skilled catechetical leaders (Directors of Faith Formation, Youth Ministry Leaders, Principals, etc.) who can directly implement effective programs.
- ✓ Collaborate with the Diocese in the certification requirements for catechetical leaders and formation of catechists including Catholic school principals and teachers.
- ✓ Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for faith formation that encompasses the catechetical needs of adults, youth and children.
- ✓ Oversee the implementation of the *Forming Disciples* – the Diocesan Faith Formation Curriculum Guide of the Diocese of Buffalo.
- ✓ Provide for a vital catechumenate that serves as a model for the process of catechesis in the parish.
- ✓ Ensure that suitable time is given to catechesis in parish and school programs for adults, youth and children.
- ✓ Support parents as faith leaders within the family by offering good liturgies, meaningful homilies, pastoral counseling, guidance and prayer.
- ✓ Empower families to take an active role in preparing children for sacraments (Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation).
- ✓ Assure that catechetical formation is available for all language groups and members with special needs.
- ✓ Witness one's own faith through personal spiritual development, skill as a liturgical presider, integrity of life and participation in the Church's mission to the world.

Parents and/or Guardians:

The most important task of the catechesis of children is to provide, through the witness of adults, an environment in which young people can grow in faith. (NDC pg. 205)

- ✓ Witness and teach the faith to their children as primary educators.
- ✓ Maintain their homes as “domestic” churches wherein relationship with God is evident and participation in parish life is promoted.
- ✓ Celebrate the sacraments with their children, thus teaching their children not just knowledge about the faith, but lived experience of the faith. The parish is “the living and permanent environment for growth in the faith” (GDC no. 158).
- ✓ Esteem their children, seeing in each the face of Christ.
- ✓ Witness their own relationship with God in their love for their children as the outcome of God's love.
- ✓ Be actively involved in the life of the Church through participation in Sunday liturgies, the sacramental life of the Church, the community life of the parish, catechetical programs, and stewardship.

Forming Disciples

- ✓ Help their children to respond to the vocation God calls them to in the life of the Church and society.
- ✓ Be socially aware, promoting the dignity of human life and nonviolence in the home and in the culture.
- ✓ Educate their children in the sanctity of human life and sexuality.
- ✓ Prepare their children for their participation in the sacraments.
- ✓ Attend to their own spiritual lives through reflection, prayer and reading of the Scriptures.

Parish and School Catechists:

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, catechists powerfully influence those being catechized by their faithful proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the transparent example of their Christian lives. (GDC no. 29A)

- ✓ Meet the diverse needs of participants through differentiated instruction, approaching the catechetical message with various strategies that will help participants learn.
- ✓ Utilize a variety of catechetical resources and assessments in order to help optimize the learning.
- ✓ Use technology and other appropriate instruments that enhance the learning and formation process.
- ✓ Provide for varied formation situations that include various grouping methods, peer leadership, and cross-curricular methods to integrate the learning process.
- ✓ Be fully informed of the catechetical content.
- ✓ Inform and involve parents in the catechesis of their children so that parents also grow in faith.
- ✓ Participate in ongoing professional development and spiritual formation.
- ✓ Pursue initial and ongoing formation as catechists in the Diocese of Buffalo
- ✓ Participate fully in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.
- ✓ Attend to their own spiritual lives through reflection, prayer and reading of the Scriptures.

Program Participants:

- ✓ Exhibit their willingness to learn through active participation in the learning environment.
- ✓ Collaborate with catechists and peers.
- ✓ Show evidence of literacy and proficiency in the catechetical message and its application to daily life.
- ✓ Come to know how Jesus Christ is central to their lives.
- ✓ Show earnestness in preparation for active participation in the life of the Catholic Church.
- ✓ Show evidence of moral decision-making and critical thinking.
- ✓ Demonstrate understanding and application of Catholic social teaching to current societal situations.
- ✓ Articulate Christian virtues as applied to personal decision-making and behaviors.

Forming Disciples

- ✓ Shows understanding that they are loved by God, are created for union with God, and are of inestimable value before the Creator.
- ✓ Exhibit spiritual growth through prayer, sacramental participation, maturing understanding of Christian discipleship and stewardship.
- ✓ Respect and appreciate the cultural and religious heritage of all people no matter the race, ethnicity or religious identity of the person.
- ✓ Exhibit understanding of their relationship with the triune God and their ultimate destiny with their Creator.

Forming Disciples

PARISH IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

In order to adequately implement Forming Disciples, the parishes are encouraged to engage in a comprehensive planning process to assess their current method, resources and outcomes. Each parish can take advantage of staff support from the Diocese in order to assess, revise or create a comprehensive plan.

To that end, parishes need be attentive to the following:

- hiring, supporting, and retaining qualified parish catechetical leaders who are theologically prepared and professionally trained and making a commitment to on-going formation and education;
- on-going, prayerful discernment by leaders that calls forth catechists capable of serving as faith witnesses who are committed to their own regular formation;
- creating and cultivating family connections that exist within the context of today's family and its many diverse forms and validation of this diversity;
- integration of faith formation efforts within the life of the parish, especially seeking opportunities to collaborate with youth ministry leaders, RCIA team, and those who work in parish outreach, pro-life ministry, special needs advocacy, and baptismal ministry;
- proper use of textbooks and other resources that closely correlate with this curriculum guide and in-servicing those who will use the resource;
- development of even stronger collaborative relationships between leaders in parishes where a Catholic school is present;

Effective implementation of *Forming Disciples* will depend on every parish faith formation program having the following components:

- at-home, family-centered learning
- connection to the larger parish/Sunday community
- incorporation of new learning strategies, eg. online, independent, small-group
- attention to service that is worthwhile, including age appropriate theological reflection

Respecting the diversity of parish life across the Diocese of Buffalo, these components will be developed in unique ways according to each parish's capacity and makeup. There is much room for innovation in order to meet the needs of the 21st century Catholic Church. Parish leaders are challenged to embrace the ever-changing landscape of today's parish and culture and to seek responses that will form disciples and cultivate a growing missionary spirit. Faith formation programs can be an important venue for this to take place.

What does this innovation look like? In some cases, this approach to comprehensive and systematic catechesis will need only subtle, but intentional enhancements. In other settings,

Forming Disciples

parish leaders will recognize that significant changes in the program model will be needed to achieve the desired results.

The following illustrations are provided to exemplify some of the models that will support the implementation of *Forming Disciples*:

1. **Parish 1** gathers children in grade levels once a week for 30 weeks for 60-75 min. (or summer session, 6hr/day for 1 week). At four times (eg. Sept., Advent, Lent, and July) families are brought together for an experience such as: family retreat on Mercy; Advent movie night with service component; Lenten parish penance service with family emphasis; and summer faith festival. In addition, the pastor plans homilies once per month that coincides with the content of the faith formation program. The parish subscribes to an approved online program and engages parents (and all adults) in learning that parallels the content in the faith formation program.
2. **Parish 2** creates small groups of families who gather on-campus or in a home, 7-10 times per year, on their own schedule. This parish model is particularly suitable, but not limited to, the formation of children and families in the catechumenate. Session outlines are provided and facilitated by either a trained member of the small group or an assigned facilitator. Each family uses an online or printed resource at-home prior to each of the small group meetings. Family service projects and reflection activities are planned. In addition, the pastor plans homilies once per month that coincide with the content of the faith formation program. (This model may also be adapted for families preparing a child for first reconciliation or first Eucharist).
3. **Parish 3** develops a whole community catechetical approach in which all parishioners, of all ages, gather monthly (10-12 times per year) for a large group learning session. At these gatherings, a variety of learning strategies that appeal to differences in learning styles, ages, and/or logistics are used. The content of these sessions must be aligned with specific learning standards outlined in *Forming Disciples* and correlated with the liturgical season or other parish/community event. These intergenerational gatherings have an at-home and/or online component for extended learning for individuals and/or the household. Small groups (by age or interests) can also develop over time. In addition, the pastor plans homilies once per month that coincide with the content of the faith formation program.
4. **Parish 4** uses online learning to provide robust content to participants, using an approved platform. The young people and families gather monthly for activities such as: prayer and worship, worthwhile service, small group discussion, etc. which are aligned with the learning standards of “Forming Disciples”. The planning team manages the liturgical and parish calendar so that the independent learning is enhanced by regular liturgical or parish events. This will bring the content of the online learning to life and/or reinforce it. In addition, the pastor plans homilies once per month that coincide with the content of the faith formation program.

Please see the appendices for further information and best practice illustrations of the various models.

EXPECTATIONS FOR OUR ADULTS, YOUTH AND CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

All persons with disabilities have the capacity to proclaim the Gospel and to be living witnesses to its truth within the community of faith and offer valuable gifts. The life of the parish is enriched by their participation.
(National Directory for Catechesis, p.206)

To welcome each person with the compassion and love that Jesus, himself, would offer makes the Body of Christ complete in our parishes. Parishes in the Diocese of Buffalo welcome and encourage participation of all people with disabilities into our parish catechetical programs to the greatest extent possible. *Forming Disciples* can and should be adapted via accommodations and/or modifications for persons with disabilities. These adaptations will be based on the learning needs of the participants and may include (but are not limited to) opportunities for access to specialized instruction, specialized materials, or materials designed for the person's developmental (not chronological) age.

The catechetical framework as developed in *Forming Disciples* provides a systematic approach to catechesis that incorporates multiple mechanisms to make learning the objectives more accessible. Parish catechetical leaders may contact the Department of Lifelong Faith Formation for specialized training and support for leaders and catechists in order to better meet the catechetical needs of people with special needs – adults and children alike.

Forming Disciples

HOW TO READ THE FOLLOWING CHARTS

1. There are six key elements in this guide; each element is a section of the guide:
 - I. Knowledge of Faith – *What We Believe*
 - II. Liturgy and Sacraments – *How We Celebrate*
 - III. Morality – *How We Live*
 - IV. Prayer – *How We Pray*
 - V. Education for Living in the Christian Community – *How We Live in the Community, the Church*
 - VI. Evangelization and Apostolic Life – *How We, as Individuals and Community, Live in Service to the World*
2. Each of the six elements/sections includes one or more standards; there are fourteen standards in all. Please refer to the Chart of Standards as a ready reference.
3. Within each element/section, indicators are provided for each standard; the indicators are provided for each grade level, beginning with Pre-K and going up through Grade 8.
4. **Bold print** indicates core indicators that must be covered in both parish and school programs.
5. *Italicized print* indicates that the standard is not core but is either introductory or enrichment material that may have already been mentioned elsewhere or may be repeated if and when there is sufficient time.

Example:

	Key Element VI: Evangelization and Apostolic Life
	<u>Standard 12</u>
	CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: Know, critique and apply social justice and stewardship principles to societal situations in a way that acknowledges and affirms the dignity of the human person and community.
	<u>Indicators</u>
1.12.01	State that Jesus shows us how to live
1.12.02	<i>Understand that we care for the poor and the suffering</i>

- The Key Element is listed at the top. This example is from Element VI: *Evangelization and Apostolic Life*
- The standard is #12: Catholic Social Teaching. All 14 standards repeat in every grade level.
- The numbers to the left of each chart indicate first the grade, then the standard, then the indicator, for example, 1.12.01 means: Grade 1, Standard 12 and indicator 1.
- Connections column has some liturgical connections to the standards/indicators and space for individual parish events/activities to be added as well.