

Building a Successful Faith Formation Program On Limited Resources

I. Space (Mission Parish: don't own anything; rent space)

- A. Classrooms
- B. Storage

II. Money/Resources (Mission Parish: most likely on a smaller budget)

- A. Curriculum and Reference books
- B. Arts and Crafts materials

III. Time (Mission Parish: possibly only 12 Sundays a year)

- A. Allocation: Class time vs. Assembly time vs. Church/Communion time vs. Prepare for Christmas play?
- B. Start time: 10:30 am vs. 12:00 pm

IV. Personnel (Mission Parish: smaller pool of parishioners to draw from)

- A. Teachers
- B. Parent involvement

I. Space

Have a designated staff member keep reference books at home and have a list of all the books that teachers can look at and then check out when needed.

II. Money/Resources

Encourage students to bring their own Bible to class each Sunday. If they don't have one, remind students/parents that they make great gifts.

Ask Parish Council and/or Ladies Society for money or at least an interest free loan.

Fundraisers: Bake sale, Restaurant nights (% of proceeds go back to organization on designated nights), Dinner/Talent show with kids providing entertainment.

Have a "Wish List" posted somewhere visible for parents to see with items your program needs (both big and small) for example: Copy machine, computer, TV, DVD player, paper, snacks, bottled water, etc. Many people want to help out, but don't know how or don't have the time to spend in the classroom. Once in awhile you can also publish the wish list in the church bulletin.

III. Time

Start on time.

For parishes that start at noon, give snacks for little kids right at the start.

Talk to the priest ahead of time for a time frame of when communion and/or children's sermon will be. Make friends with a Deacon or tell other people you know in church to let you know when certain parts of the Badarak are taking place so that you know when to go into church at the desired time you wish.

Meet on days other than Sunday or before or after church. Perhaps meet on your off weeks as well (for those Mission Parishes with a limited number of services).

IV. Personnel

Ask parish priest and/or parish council for anyone they might recommend to help out.

Place an advertisement in the church bulletin for volunteers.

Have space on registration form for parents to indicate if they are interested in substituting, helping out with crafts and/or field trips, Christmas program, parties, being a board member such as Treasurer or Recording or Corresponding Secretary, etc. Also have parents list talents/hobbies i.e. play an instrument, good with arts and crafts, etc.

Have a sign up sheet at registration with possible committees that parents can be on such as party planning, fundraising, substitute teacher, Christmas program, etc.

OVERWHELMED AND UNDERPAID

TIPS FOR SUPERINTENDENTS

How to plan, organize and recruit students, teachers and parents for your Sunday School Program

I Recruiting and Retaining Staff

A. Recruiting Staff

1. Approach former teachers
2. Approach friends that you know and trust who will be dedicated
3. Approach young people who have graduated from the program

B. Retaining Staff

1. Use the "team teaching" approach (two teachers assigned to each class)
2. Approach parents who have helped in the Sunday School previously
(assign a parent to assist the teachers whenever possible)
3. Wherever possible, lighten their work load

II Recruiting and Retaining students

A. Recruiting Students

1. Send flyers to the entire church membership through the Sunday Bulletin and/or mail
2. Send letters of invitation to former students each summer in August with a September registration date
3. Station two or three teachers at a registration table in the foyer of the church to approach families with children who are attending church. Giving children a sucker is very helpful.
4. Visit any Armenian school in your city or surrounding area and ask permission to pass out flyers announcing the start of Sunday School or ask permission to speak to classes about Sunday School particularly at the beginning of the school year.

B. Retaining Students - *This is particularly pointed toward the 10 - 15 age group*

1. Plan lessons and activities which meet the needs of all students. These lessons must be meaningful and issue oriented, giving student tools with which to exist in today's world.
2. Plan challenging lessons which are issue oriented and use biblical scripture and incidents from the bible to validate your point of view.
3. Encourage students to discuss their feelings and ideas about their faith and what it is

III Orientation for New and Returning Staff (two sessions)

A. Session I (at the close of the school year)

1. Evaluation of the year (curriculum, materials and programs) See attached agenda for this meeting with points for discussion

2. Discussion of the general outline for each Sunday morning.(time allotted to all activities)
3. Decide what ideas and events to retain from the previous year. Be positive
4. Distribute and discuss the calendar for the new year.

B. Session II

1. Staff and classroom assignments
2. Teaching materials appropriate to each grade level available (review new material available)
3. Discussion of teaching materials to be used by each grade level (recommended by the CEC<Western Diocese)
4. Plan and set Budget for the school year
 - a. Allotment for each teacher for arts and crafts
 - b. Ordering of material requested by staff members
 - c. Fund raising events to cover various expenses and create camperships for students
(Palm Sunday candle sales, Easter bake sales, luncheons)

5. Decide when, where & how often to have staff meeting & their length

5. Discuss and plan on seasonal Programs/luncheons in which students will participate
 - a. Christmas Eve (student participation)
 - b. Easter(student participation on Maundy Thursday washing of feet)
 - c. End of the Year Celebration(students demonstrate what they have accomplished)
 1. Presentation of Certificates of Achievement
 2. Presentation of Awards of Merit
 3. Presentation of Camperships to the Diocesan Summer Camp to students who qualify under the criteria set by the teaching staff

a 2 hr. special orientation for new teachers to discuss how to teach the material they've given

IV Types of Classrooms available for Sunday School use

- A. Stationary (one that was originated as a classroom and can be decorated and maintained)
- B. Traveling (one which must be set up every Sunday morning and taken down again. Teachers carry everything in a plastic tub or cardboard box)

V General Assembly Area

- A. Create an atmosphere of a church service
 1. Card table functions as altar covered with white cloth, candles, picture of Christ , flowers and an open bible (the appropriate number of folding chairs facing the card table)
 2. C D playing the sharagans as the children enter
 3. Songbooks with sharagans in Armenian and English translations and Bible Songs in English
 4. Armenian Prayers for children with English translation
- B. Staff member with knowledge of sharagans to teach or lead the children
- C. Staff member who can play the piano to accompany the singing (or use the C D and ask children to sing along with the C D (if no piano available, use the C D technique)
- D. Offering plates(2) (small Easter basket work very well)

VI Time line for Sunday School

- A. General Assembly I (15-20 min.)
 - 1. Welcome and a brief thought for the day
 - 2. Learn sharagans (melodies, meanings and where they take place in the badarak)
- B. Class time (30-40 min)
- C. General Assembly II (Armenian lesson for the day) 10-15min .
- D. Benediction and dismissal

VII Schedule for the "First Sunday of the Year"

- A. Reception for students and families (cookies and coffee)
 - 1. Welcome by the Superintendent
 - 2. Introduction of the staff
 - 3. Introduction of the Code of Conduct and Dress Code
 - 4. Explanation of the year ahead
 - a. Age appropriate curriculum
 - b. Church attendance
 - c. Parent involvement on a volunteer basis
- B. Students sent to their individual classes for registration and short lesson
- C. Parents organized into a Sunday School PTO
 - 1. Introduce calendar of events in which students will be involved
 - 2. Introduce ways in which parents can be involved
 - a. Parent involvement in Sunday School sponsored events such as:
 - 1. Family Night Dinner
 - 2. After Church coffee hour
 - 3. Drivers for any trip older classes may take
 - 4. Help with projects which older classes may undertake
 - b. Parent assistance on Sundays in the classroom or with special treats for students
 - 1. Birthday parties
 - 2. Christmas party for students
 - 3. Donations to help with special Sunday School activities