CALGARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL CONFERENCE

John Roberto
LifelongFaith Associates
jroberto@lifelongfaith.com
www.LifelongFaith.com

FAITH FORMATION TODAY
An Ecological View of Faith Formation

We invite people into the way of life that embodies God’s love, justice, compassion, and reconciliation, by being, doing, and thinking about it together. The best curriculum for forming children, youth, and anyone else in Christian faith is guided participation in a community of practice where people are vibrantly, passionately, risking themselves together in lives of faith in a world crying out for the love of Christ.

(Joyce Mercer)
Communities of Practice

Guided participation in a community of practice puts a premium on both participation and practice. . . . We become Christian, taking on the identity of one who is a disciple of Jesus, by acting the way Christians act, and by talking the way Christians talk. Over time through practice, even our hearts and minds are formed in this way of life.

(Joyce Mercer)

A Comprehensive View: Eight Faith Forming Processes
THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Vision & Core Principles

- concern for the poor and social justice
- faith in the presence of God
- quality education
- respect for all persons
- inclusive community
Essentials of a Faith Forming Culture

- Student Centered Approach
- Community Life
- Religion Curriculum Relevant to Life Today
- Spiritual Formation (retreats)
- Prayer in Daily Life
- Liturgies & Prayer Experiences
- Service Learning (local, global)
- Adults Engaged in Faith Life of School
- Formation of Adults

Alignment

- Mission Core Values and Purpose
- Curriculum
- Co-curricular Programs
- Spiritual Life
- Hiring & Professional Development
- Policies & Procedures
- Faculty Staff Administration
- Communication
- Relationship Community Life
DeMarillac Academy
https://www.demarillac.org

Example: DeMarillac Academy
Families at the Center

The *Family-at-the Center Approach* recognizes that parents and the family are the most powerful influence for virtually every child and youth outcome—personal, academic, social, and spiritual-religious; and that parents are the most important influence on the social and religious lives of children, youth, and emerging adults.

Given the central role of families in shaping the lives of children and youth, the value of engaging, supporting, and educating families should be self-evident to all of us.
Spiritual-Religious Diversity

The Unaffiliateds  The Spirituals  The Occasionals  The Actives

Decline in Religious Practice
Decline in Religious Practice

- Significant indicators, such as religious identification as a Christian, worship attendance, marriages and baptisms in the church, and changing generational patterns, point to a decline in family religious socialization across all denominations.
- There is also a decline in religious traditions and practices at home. Gen X and Millennial parents often lack the religious literacy and religious experiences necessary for faith transmission.

Decline in Religious Practice

Parents and families reflect an increasing diversity in religious beliefs, practices, and affiliation.
- 1/4 of Generation Xers and over 1/3 of Millennials are not religious affiliated and the number of unaffiliated Millennials is growing
- Families of Generation X and Millennial parents are participating less in church life and Sunday worship. Religion and spirituality may be important to families today, but for many it is not usually expressed by participation in churches
What Makes a Difference in Faith Growth?

1. Parents’ personal faith and practice
2. Parent-child relationship: close, warm
3. Parents’ modeling and teaching a religious faith
4. Parents’ involvement in church life and Sunday worship
5. Grandparents’ religious influence & relationship
6. Religious tradition a child is born into
7. Parents of the same faith
8. Family conversations about faith
9. Family religious practices: prayer, reading the Bible, service to others, celebrating holidays/rituals

Faith Practices

*Effective religious socialization comes about through embedded practices; that is, through specific, deliberate religious activities that are firmly intertwined with the daily habits of family routines, of eating and sleeping, of having conversations, of adorning spaces in which people live, of celebrating the holidays, and of being part of a community. Compared with these practices, the formal teachings of religious leaders often pale in significance. Yet when such practices are present, formal teachings also become more important. “*

(Robert Wuthnow, Growing Up Religious)
Faith Practices

1. Eating together – especially the power of Sunday meals and holidays
2. Praying – bedtime rituals and prayer, grace before meals
3. Having family conversations
4. Displaying sacred objects and religious images, especially the Bible
5. Celebrating holidays
6. Providing moral instruction
7. Engaging in family devotions and reading the Bible

The daily round of family activities must somehow be brought into the presence of God. Parents praying, families eating together, conversations focusing on what is proper and improper, and sacred artifacts are all important ways in which family space is sacralized. They come together, forming an almost imperceptible mirage of experience.

(Robert Wuthnow, Growing Up Religious)
Faith Practices

- 79% Pray together
- 77% Worship together
- 76% Eat together
- 71% Celebrate rituals & holidays
- 58% Serve those in need
- 55% Engage in family conversations
- 51% Nurture my own faith as a parent

Practices & Everyday Life

- Everyday experiences are the core resources of spiritual narratives, even for those affiliated with traditional religious institutions
- “People feel most connected to whatever they understand as God, the divine, a Higher Power when they’re deeply engaged in the fabric of everyday life, spending time with family, with friends, preparing and sharing food, enjoying their pets.”
Practices & Everyday Life

Spiritually meaningfully practices:
1. enjoying time with family
2. enjoying time with friends
3. enjoying time with pets or other animals
4. preparing and/or sharing food/meals
5. praying
6. enjoying nature
7. listening to/playing music
8. enjoying/creating art
9. physical activity/sports
10. yoga and meditation

On the list of 25 items, the last three items were reading/studying scripture, attending worship, and attending a non-worship activity, event or meeting at church.

Eight Faith Forming Processes
Families at the Center Strategies
Forming Faith

1. Discovering God in Everyday Life
2. Living Faith Practices @Home
3. Celebrating Milestones
4. Celebrating Seasonal Events
5. Encountering the Bible through the Year
6. Intergenerational Connections: Community, Learning, Service

Family Faith Formation Network

Families at the Center of Faith Formation
A Network of Experiences, Activities & Resources for families with Children
Extend the Event

Church or School Event or Program ➔ At Home & Daily Life

- Digital Content to Extend & Deepen Event
- Interaction
- Connection
- Communication
- Demonstration
- Offering the Event in New Formats
Build on an Event/Experience
(Sacraments, VBS, Mission Trip, and much more)

Preparing
• What types of experiences, programming, activities, and resources will you develop to prepare people for the event?

Experiencing
• How will you design the event?
• How will you engage age groups, families, and the faith community?

Living
• How will you sustain/extend the event?
• What types of experiences, programs, activities, and resources will you offer people?

Flip the Model
@ Home / Daily Life
Exploring the Content - print, audio, video, activities

@ The Program
Applying the Content: Create – Practice – Perform - Participate
Families at the Center Strategies
Forming Faith

7. Building a Strong Family Life
8. Empowering Parents & Grandparents as Faith Formers

Nurturing RELATIONSHIPS
- Positive communication
- Affection
- Emotional openness
- Support for sparks

Establishing ROUTINES
- Family meals
- Shared activities
- Meaningful traditions
- Dependability

Maintaining EXPECTATIONS
- Openness about tough topics
- Fair rules
- Defined boundaries
- Clear expectations
- Contributions to family

Adapting to CHALLENGES
- Management of daily commitments
- Adaptability
- Problem solving
- Democratic decision making

Connecting to COMMUNITY
- Neighborhood cohesion
- Relationships with others
- Enriching activities
- Supportive resources

Developing Strong Family Life

Family Assets – Search Institute
Developing Strong Family Life

Create a Family Life Plan for Each Life Cycle Stage
Using the Family Assets and Developmental Relationships, curate and create developmentally-appropriate programs, activities, and resources for families at each stage.

1. Family website
2. Parent programs
3. Family programs
4. Family mentors
5. Life cycle support groups for parents
Developing Strong Family Life

Parent Program (Keep Connected)
1. Communicating effectively
2. Establishing family routines: family meals, shared activities, daily commitments
3. Celebrating meaningful traditions and rituals
4. Discussing tough topics
5. Making decisions and solving problems as a family
6. Learning how to build strong relationships and express care for each other
7. Developing the strengths & potential of children & youth
8. Supporting each other: encouraging and praising, giving feedback, standing up for each other
9. Treating each with respect and dignity

Empowering Parents & Grandparents

Guides for Developing Parent Programming
1. Address diverse spiritual-religious identities of parents.
2. Have parents practice new skills with their own children during program sessions.
3. Give parents a plan for parenting.
   • Give them a plan for parenting proactively.
   • Show them how it works.
   • Tell them what to do today.
Empowering Parents & Grandparents

Guides for Developing Parent Programming

4. Address the levels of partnership with parents.
   • Aware
   • Involved
   • Engaged
   • Invested

5. Design programs that engage parents in the learning experience.

6. Use a variety of environments & methods to engage all parents.

7. Use online platforms and digitally enabled strategies.

Empowering Parents & Grandparents

Ideas for Parent Programming

1. Parent website
2. Parent programs—a progression of workshops, webinars, and/or courses for each stage of the lifecycle
3. Laboratory experiences—immersion/hands-on experiences through church events or family/intergenerational programs
4. Parent mentors
5. Lifecycle support groups for parents
6. A parent catechumenate—around key milestone experiences and “moments of return”
Alpha: Pathways to Christian Faith

Introduction Dinner: Is there more to life than this?
Week 1: Who is Jesus?
Week 2: Why did Jesus die?
Week 3: How can we have faith?
Week 4: Why and how do I pray?
Week 5: Why and how should I read the Bible?
Week 6: How does God guide us?
Week 7: How can I resist evil?
Week 8: Why & how should we tell others?
Week 9: Does God heal today?
Week 10: What about the Church?
Weekend: Who is the Holy Spirit?
INTERGENERATIONAL

Multigenerational Households Make Sense

Why more and more adults are living with their parents.

By Brian Doneg

Lives with the grandparents to back Brooks

Photo by David DeJano Digital Vision/Thinkstock
The Preschool Inside a Nursing Home

For the elderly residents, interacting with the kids is a jolt back to the world of the living.

ROAD SCHOLAR

Multi-Generational Adventures
Grandparent, Parent & Child Trips!

- More than 300 intergenerational and family programs available
- All-inclusive packages: meals, lodging, all activities & much more
- Educational and fun: sex talks, music lessons, lectures

Road Scholar has been leading nonprofit adventures for 40 years

Learn more about our most popular intergenerational and family programs.
(Re)Emergence of Intergenerational

Response to...
1. age fragmentation
2. individualism & isolation in society
3. need for connection
4. need for mentors and guides of all ages
5. research on forming faith
6. five-generational society and church
7. the benefits that can come to each generation, to the whole church, and to society-as-a-whole
Importance of Intergenerationality

Christian commitment is formed and strengthened as persons develop relationships and actively participate in intergenerational faith communities that teach, model, and live our the communities’ beliefs.

Importance of Intergenerationality

Intergenerational experiences strengthen and create new relationships among people of all ages, enhances their sense of belonging in the faith community, and increases participation in church life.
Importance of Intergenerationality

Intergenerational experiences support families by surrounding them with a community of faith and engaging the whole family in a variety of faith-forming experiences together.

Intergenerational experiences strengthen the ability (confidence and competence) of parents and grandparents to promote religious socialization at home; be role models of faithful practice; and engage in faith practices at home.

Connect Intergeneration & Age-Specific

**Preparation:** knowledge & practices for participating fully

**Reflection:** on the experience and living its meaning in daily life

**Guided Participation:** in the events of church life & the Christian Faith
Connect Intergenerational & Age-Specific

Worship
1. Learn about worship and how to worship
2. Experience Sunday worship with the faith community
3. Live the Sunday worship experience at home and in daily life

Bible
1. Learn about the Bible and how to read it, interpret it, and apply it
2. Experience the Bible at Sunday worship and at home
3. Develop their own practice of Bible study and reading.

Connect Intergenerational & Age-Specific

Christian Tradition
1. Learn about Jesus and the Christian tradition
2. Experience the life of Jesus and the tradition through participation in the lectionary and church year feasts and seasons
3. Live the Christian faith today at home and in daily life

Service & Justice
1. Learn about the justice issues of our day and the biblical and church teachings on justice, service, and care for creation
2. Experience acts of justice and service with the faith community—locally and globally
3. Engage in the practices of serving those in need, caring for creation, and working for justice
Enhance Intergenerational Relationships

1. Incorporate intergenerational dialogues into programming
2. Develop mentoring relationships
3. Involve the community in praying for each generation,
4. Organize social and recreational activities that build intergenerational relationships
5. “Intergenerationalize” age-group programming
6. Integrate intergenerational programming into an age-group program plan and calendar
7. Offer service projects and mission trips for all ages
8. Offer simple, one-time intergenerational experiences: arts, music/concerts, drama, social events, service projects, sports, educational experiences

Intergenerational

Connect the generations
Infuse intergenerational relationships & experiences
Create intergenerational experiences
Professional Development & Formation

1. Orientation programs
2. Embedded in faculty meetings
3. In-service presentations and workshops
4. Retreat experiences: in-school, out-of-school
5. Outside workshops, conferences, webinars
6. Courses: on campus and online
7. Published resources: print, audio, video
8. Online programming: print, audio podcasts, video presentations
Professional Development & Formation

- Create a systematic plan for professional development and spiritual formation that is personalized and customized around the needs and time availability of faculty and staff.
- “One-size-fits-all” model of professional development and spiritual formation is unable to address the unique learning needs and busy lives of educators.
- With the abundance of online content, and digital platforms and tools schools can diversify their offerings and provide personalized, “just in time” learning that fits people’s lives.

Personalized Professional Development

1. Assessing Learning Needs & Competencies
2. Working with a Mentor to Develop a Plan
3. Finding Programs and Resources
4. Engaging in Learning
5. Sharing with the Others
6. Reflecting on Growth and Identifying New Needs
University of Dayton