

# Vibrant Faith Institute

## Designing Family Faith Formation Strategies

A strategy is a careful plan or method for achieving a particular goal, usually over a long period of time. This process focuses on designing one or more strategies (experiences, events, programs, activities, and resources) for families at home and at church.

There are a variety of strategy ideas to assist you in design work. There are six strategies for families at home and at church in Chapter Six of *Families at the Center of Faith Formation*. The article, "Strategies for Nurturing Family Faith" has additional ideas. Each of the strategies can be designed to specifically address the needs and life situations of families at a particular stage of life.

1. Discovering God in everyday family life.
2. Forming faith at home through the life cycle.
3. Forming faith through milestones.
4. Celebrating seasonal events through the year.
5. Encountering God in the Bible through the year.
6. Connecting families intergenerationally

### Step 1. Select and describe the target audience.

**Select:** You can focus your design work on one or more of age groups:

- Children: Birth through grade 5 or only young children or only older children
- Adolescents: Grades 6-12 or only young adolescents or only older adolescents

**Describe** your target audience: Describe your target audience from the point of view of the family (not church leaders). Describe the life stage and religious-spiritual characteristics of your target audience. Remember: ***We design for people.***

- What's going on in their lives at this stage of life? What are their greatest needs and interests at this stage of life? What are their greatest challenges?
- How would you describe their spiritual and religious life? What are their greatest spiritual-religious needs and interests
- What are the biggest challenges you face in reaching your target audience of families, and in engaging them in faith forming experiences and activities?

### Step 2. Identify the focus of your design work.

What are the most important needs, interests, and/or challenges in the lives of your target audience that you want to address? You can't do everything. Select the needs, interests, and/or challenges you want to focus your design work.

### Step 3. Develop ideas to address the focus of your design work.

Generate a variety of ideas for new initiatives with families.

- **Review** the faith formation strategies: Review the ideas in Chapter Six and the article, "Strategies for Nurturing Family Faith."
- **Renewing Current Efforts:** What are you currently doing with the target audience - programs, activities, etc.? What do you need to strengthen? What do you need to eliminate or redesign?
- **Creating New Initiatives:** What do you need to create? How can you creatively address the needs and interests of your target audience? Imagine the types of experiences, programs, activities, resources you could offer

Use a brainstorming activity like "How Might We?" to generate ideas. Here's how it works with a group. Adapt this for individual use.

Brainstorm responses to the question: "How might We?" Distribute sticky notes and pens/markers to everyone on the team. Ask them to start their opportunity statements with "How might We . . ." and abbreviate on sticky notes to "HMW." Go for quantity, not quality at this point. Post all of the ideas on sheets of easel paper. Together as a group select three to five HMW opportunity statements through discussion or the use of voting (see below). You might want to cluster HMW statements before discussion and voting. After selecting the three to five HMW statements, write each of the selected statements on a separate sheet of easel paper and brainstorm ideas for turning the opportunity into a practical project. Cluster similar ideas and select the best ideas for each HMW statement. move on to evaluation.

### 4. Select one or more initiatives to design.

Review all of the ideas you generated and select one or more that you want to design into a new initiative.

1. Describe each initiative (program, activity, event, experience, resource) in a style and language appropriate to the target audience.
2. Create or curate resources and activities to design your initiatives (see Chapter Six and the Resources page).
3. Review digitally enabled and connected strategies to enhance and expand your initiatives. How can you use digitally enabled strategies to improve, expand, or create new faith formation programming? Identify specific ways you can integrate digital methods and media into your plan.
  - *Extend programming.* Which current programs can you extend using online programming? Identify the kinds of content you would provide online to extend each program.
  - *Flip the program using online content.* Which programs are good candidates for flipping the content? Is there high-quality digital content (audio, video, visual, print) available in

an online format that you can access? Identify the programs you could flip. What will be available online? What will the gathered session look like when the content is online?

- *Online programming.* What types of programs can you create online? How can you deliver programming online (webinar, streaming presentation)? How can you develop an online resource center as a portal to curated content?
- *Multiformat programming.* Which programs are good candidates for multiformat programming? What would a design look like for one multiformat program?
- *Prepare and follow-up programming.* Which programs can you use a digital strategy to prepare people online for an event or program and then follow up with online content and activities? What would a design for one program look like?

4. Complete an outline of the implementation steps:

- When: date and times
- Where: location(s) or setting(s)
- Who: leaders needed
- What: resources need to implement the program