

Variety of Learning Activities in Inclusive Religious Education

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Use techniques that involve the student in the learning process in order to motivate the student to learn, focus the student's attention, reinforce learning and evaluate progress.

Most people remember: 20% of what they hear,
 30% of what they see,
 70% of what they say and
 90% of what they do.

Some students have auditory, visual, speech and language and/or mobility impairments. Teach to the student's strongest learning mode: auditory, visual or kinesthetic. Right brain, intuitive styles of learning such as music, art, drama and prayer are especially recommended for persons with cognitive limitations.

AUDITORY LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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| Lecture | Teacher speaks, student listens. |
| Storytelling | Stories can be used to inform, motivate and entertain. |
| Music | Excellent means of helping students remember key concepts because music engages both sides of the brain. Music in 4/4 time can be played at a barely audible volume to balance the two sides of the brain and helps students focus their attention. |
| Silence | A time with no verbal input, possibly with a quiet musical background, can provide students with a chance to reflect on, assimilate and integrate what they have learned; It can provide a time for interior prayer. |

VISUAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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| Objects | Real objects are preferred to photographs, drawings or words. |
| Pictures | Photographs are more realistic and easier to understand than most drawings. Check for clarity. Some students have difficulty sorting out the images. Photographs of the parish site and people and objects from the parish help student connect with the content. Some students have difficulty transferring learning about a generic church to their own church, any priest to their own parish priests, etc. |

Drawings	Drawings can help focus attention. Check for clarity. The more images in the drawing, the more difficult it is to understand. The more abstract, the image, the more difficult it is to identify. An overhead can be used to point out different aspects of the drawing.
Reading	Reading ability levels are likely to vary. The Contemporary English Version of scripture is now approved for the children's sacramentary and is easy to understand. Focus on the main idea of a lesson and help students identify and highlight or circle it. Have student work in pairs or triads and ask for one of the partners to volunteer to read quietly aloud to the other to ensure that students with low reading skills cover the material.
Audio-visuals	Check for clarity of subject matter. Give an introduction with specific instructions as to what to look and listen for. Turn off the sound and provide your own narration if vocabulary and concepts are not within students' capability. Students need to be able to decipher images, words and story line. Check for understanding and if necessary, review the story line or content.

ACTIVITIES CALLING FOR A VERBAL RESPONSE

Reading	Always ask for volunteers to read out loud so that a student with a low reading ability is not embarrassed by being called upon to read. Short choral reading engages all of the students and those who have more difficulty reading can echo what they hear.
Singing	As in music, singing aides in memory retention. Short, songettes to melodies everyone knows can reinforce the main concept you are trying to get across. Older student can help write them. If you are not comfortable singing, see if you can recruit a volunteer who would be willing to play the guitar and lead the singing. If they cannot come to class, ask them to make a tape of the songs for each class for you. Find out who your song leaders are among the students.
Questions	Yes" or "No" are the simplest verbal (and non-verbal) responses. Asking "when" and "where" require remembering. "Why" and "how" require reasoning.

Discussion	Evaluating demands that the students share their views. Creative thinking involves drawing upon their background, understanding and experience.
Puppets	Sometimes a student who is hesitant to speak for his or herself will speak through a puppet.
Prayer	"Amen" is the easiest prayer. Short familiar prayers are next easiest. Prayers the students formulate for themselves are more difficult. Caution: Never react to a prayer a student formulates. They are not talking to you! Invite the students to be silent a moment to give God a chance to speak to their heads.

Non-Verbal Responses:

A student who is unable to speak, may respond by pointing, drawing, sign language, gesture, rearranging words or materials, writing, facial expression, pantomime, picture or word board...

KINESTHETIC LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Writing	Single words can be used to fill in blanks. Rubber stamps, stickers or paper and a glue stick can be with words or symbols can be used by students who cannot write. (A volunteer or aide may be recruited to help prepare these materials. Students may be giving an option to tape record a response.)
Gesture	If you use American Sign Language be sure to use the correct sign! Simple gestures can be expressive.
Manipulatives	Example: hold up red or green cards for "yes" or "no" responses.
Posture	Build in needed movement by sitting for some activities, standing for others, folding hands to pray, moving from seats to prayer center...
Art activities	Use art to reinforce learning by continuing to connect the concept the students are learning to the activity they are doing. Do not assume that they automatically get the connection.
Flannel board	This activity requires minimal motor skills and is helpful in teaching a story line, and recalling key concepts, people, words.

- Drama Narrate a story to be mimed or have students repeat the lines of their characters after you narrate. Example: Jesus said: "Peace be with you." Student who is playing the role of Jesus repeats: "Peace be with you." An alternative would be to have everyone echo the words in a cascade fashion going around the room. (Students remember best what THEY say.)
- Role Play Set up a situation and have student respond to it. If the response is inappropriate ask the class: "How else could he/she respond.?" After class gives input start over with something like: "Let's try this again" or "Take it from the top."
- Video tape Make sure permission to photograph or videotape students is on file in the office. Have students produce their own audio-visual program. (Ask for a parish volunteer to direct this activity only.)
- Life Experiences Provide life experiences on with to base religious concepts. Be sure to make the connection between the activity and the point of the lesson. Examples: nature walks, arranging flowers, preparing food, visiting church.
- Games Use an interactive game format. Adapt TV game shows. Resource: Fun Group Devotions for Children's Ministry, GROUP Pub. Co., Loveland, CO.

Remember what works and be ready to use it again as needed to re-focus student attention.