



SAINT CATHERINE CENTER FOR *Special Needs*

One Task, Many Roles

Catechesis for Special Needs

The one task is supported inclusive catechesis, yet there are many ways that people in your parish can contribute. It is possible for people with a wide variety of skills, time availability and/or interest to contribute to the task. Not everyone needs to be a catechist. As for any role involved in religious education, training is required to support the level of interaction of the task.

- **Catechist** – Catechist with skills as an educator, particularly special education, although does not necessarily need to be professionally trained. Sense of humor and flexibility are a huge asset.
- **Aides/Assistants** – Caring adults who can be present in groups to be extra eyes, hands, legs and hearts. Sense of humor and flexibility are a huge asset.
- **Teen Aides** – Caring teens who can be present in groups to be extra eyes, hands, legs and hearts. Sense of humor and flexibility are a huge asset.
- **Buddies** – Someone who will support one person in particular in a larger group, in a noninvasive way. Buddies would also be very helpful for modeling/teaching particular behaviors for worship. Sense of humor and flexibility are a huge asset.
- **Inclusion Consultants** – People with special education background who can serve as consultant/support for catechists.
- **Hall ‘Monitors’** – Some facilities have many entrances and exits. It’s good to have extra people around for the restroom and keeping in those who belong inside and keeping out those who belong outside.
- **Crafters** – Some materials/activities may require extra preparation for children with limited fine motor skills. It can be a huge help to religious educators if someone else can prepare the material once he/she has determined what is needed.
 - For people with limited or no ability to read, it is beneficial to adapt the materials used. For example make books interactive to allow for matching

or selection of important items in a picture; creating story boards for storytelling.

- People with computer skills talented graphics software, such as Boardmaker, to make picture schedules or social stories, and/or can use a digital camera for the same purpose or to make a “Tour” of your community’s worship space.
- **Audio Recorders** – Someone with a good speaking voice to record prayers, songs, and other catechetical material. This is especially for children with visual impairments or who are blind, but also helpful for others, particularly children with attention issues.
- **Special Needs Coordinator or Assistant** – This person expands the bandwidth of the religious education director. As an assistant, someone who can make the phone calls to schedule meetings and make contact for adaptive services noted above. As a coordinator, the person could reach out to families who have indicated special needs on the registration form for their child, and/or coordinate the “religious education IEP” process for the program. Sense of humor and flexibility are a huge asset for both. Understanding of education process is helpful for coordinator.
- Remember, people with autism and/or other disabilities are also called to serve and love to contribute. They can do some of the tasks above, or others in the life of the congregation. Let their gifts and your creativity guide you.

¹ Autism and Faith: A Journey into Community, edited by Mary Beth Walsh, Ph.D., Alice F. Walsh, M.Div. & William C. Gaventa, M.Div, May 2008, pp. 20-26. Taken from article of this name from this collection of articles and reflections by parents and individuals living with autism spectrum disorders and professionals who walk with them in faith.