

CEDF6210 Ministry with Children

North Park Seminary

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The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus, its content and assignments, in light of the experience and background of the participants, the size of class, and the emergence of one or more unexpected issues or events, relevant to the subject matter, that prove to be important to the class as a whole.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The focus of the course is the *church's* ministry with children exploring implications from child development, key responsibilities in children's ministry, design of learning experiences, and relationship of children's ministry and families. The course does not deal with Christian schools or home schooling—though insights from the course can be applied to these areas.

North Park Theological Seminary provides services for students with documented disabilities to ensure equal access to programs, services, facilities, and activities. Students with a disability who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Seminary Academic Services as soon as possible. If desired or necessary, discussion pertaining to documentation and accommodation can take place at another suitable location or by telephone. Further information about the American Disabilities Act Services is found in the Student Academic Handbook.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course, students will:

- Be able to articulate and apply various theories of development and offer an interpretation of the child
- Be able to demonstrate through accurate research key issues and major questions related to children's spirituality
- Be sensitive to the developmental needs the children and how to become an advocate for children
- Develop tools for designing leadership for Children's Ministry

Course Texts

Catherine Stonehouse's book, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998)

Nadine Burke Harris: How childhood trauma affects health ... - TED Talks

https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health

Research Journals on developmental theories

Research Journals on spirituality in young children

[Course Expectations and Requirements](#)

Course Learning Objectives

There are eight major foci of this course.

1. To describe the practice of child development and its relationship with theories of development.
2. To articulate principles and theories of the developing child and how they relate to young children with exceptional needs.
3. To explore and discuss the role of culture and family in the development of children. To articulate how culture, family patterns, and gender are related to developmental practices.
4. To identify the role of the educator/Sunday school teacher in providing strategies and methods to facilitate collaboration across culture and gender and among students especially students with English as a Second Language.
5. To develop a guide for observing the learning style of young and school-aged children
6. To be able to address the areas of motor, cognitive, communication, socio-emotional, self-help, and play-skill development in the spiritual development of young children.
7. To become proficient in understanding parents' perspectives and concern related to spiritual development.
8. To develop a handbook as a model for team participation and information sharing.

BACKGROUND READING IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Complete all readings prior to the course. Locate a reasonably current book on child development, or alternatively, a book on lifespan development (your university or local library should have several) write a five-page reflection paper on at least five issues in the development of children. Development such as: Cognitive development, social emotional development, physical development, communication development, language development etc. Bring culture and ethnicity questions to your reading. You will be asked in class to suggest insights for the ways in which children can be nurtured in these areas in the church and home.

Additionally, Catherine Stonehouse's book, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998) reviews major developmental theories. The last couple of chapters describe her work with young children using a learning approach described as "godly play."

Learning Assignment #1 – Child Development (about 20% of final evaluation)

The various theories of development offer an interpretation of the child. However,

developmental theories are not intended to be predictive. The life of the actual child cannot be replaced by a theory. From notes you have taken from your reading in child development, be prepared to share with the class your judgment of aspects of the conventional theories of child development that should be challenged—and why. And also be prepared to share what aspects could be more normative for children? Make a handout for your class colleagues.

BACKGROUND READING ON CHILDREN’S SPIRITUALITY

A major area of interest in the 21st century is the nature of children’s spirituality. For some child development theories, the dimension of spiritual or religious development is either not considered or underplayed because it is difficult to measure or comprehend. Think back to the reading and discussion about child development. Reflect on the complex relationship of child development and spirituality. How do we understand children’s developing spirituality in relation to their growing cognitive and social capacities, for example?

Learning Assignment #2 – Children’s Spirituality (about 20% of your final evaluation)

Child spirituality

<http://www.open.edu/openlearn/body-mind/childhood-youth/childhood-and-youth-studies/childhood/child-spirituality>

<https://www.familyeducation.com/life/social-emotional-development/childrens-development-spirituality>

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_does_spirituality_grow_in_children

<https://www.hekupu.ac.nz/sites/default/files/2017-10/Spirituality-in-early-childhood-education.pdf>

videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWkgHHp0kDY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pigkHurAzcE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4sWNlr3zLQ>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lihBCI_A4x4

Go to the links above or to your library or internet and read until you have some clear understanding of key issues and major questions related to children’s spirituality. Prepare a 2-page report of your findings to share in class session. As part of your report, you may want to raise the question of children and conversion in relation to children’s spirituality. Note Representative Titles listed at the end of the syllabus.

BACKGROUND SEARCH ON INTERVENTION AND ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN

Do an Internet search for specific acts of justice and intervention from church communities, nationally and internationally, focusing on your culture or ethnicity if desired. In what ways are Christian communities taking a stand for children?

Terms that may help your search include, Human Trafficking, Child Slavery, Child Labor, Children at Risk, Children of War, Rights of the Child, Children’s Rights, Child Protection. Don’t

assume that North America is any more a safe haven for children than any other country. Browse the sites until you have some understanding of major abuses against children in the various regions of the world cited—and have gained information about some of the projects. If you are familiar with advocacy work with children and you know of other sites—share these with the class.

Learning Assignment #3 – Child Advocacy (about 20% of your final evaluation)

Prepare a 2-3page *draft* report on your findings that also includes ideas that you will bring to your church as a stimulus for discussion about how your church can become an advocate for children. We will review your ideas in class session and refine them for presentation. Findings presented by your course colleagues will give you additional ideas to add to the final document you will present to your church.

BACKGROUND PREPARATION FOR DISCUSSION ABOUT CHILDREN’S LEADERSHIP

Read three Foundational Areas for Productive Children’s Ministry document attached to this syllabus to prepare for class interaction concerning leadership responsibilities.

Learning Assignment #4—Children’s Ministry Leadership (about 20% of your final evaluation)

NOTE: If you are currently involved in children’s ministry or have significant experience in same, you may propose alternatives to the following.

(a) *Professional Consultation*. Complete the initial stage of the consultative process. From the Interview Guide attached to this syllabus identify one or two areas for the interview and select 4-5 questions that you will use to guide the interview. Interview three (3) leaders (professional and lay) about the ministry. Based on your findings, prepare a one-page report of themes and patterns from your interviews. This is merely a practice exercise and focuses on one vital aspect of a consultation—the interview.

Subject to change

Date of Week	Topic	Reading Assignments	Assignments, Papers, Presentations
Day One	Introduction to Ministry with Children	Group activity (KWL) Course Learning Objectives Overview of the developmental theories	Five-page reflection paper on at least five issues in the development of children:
Day Two	Learning Assignment #1 – Child Development	<i>Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey</i> <i>Videos discussion</i> <i>Brain development</i>	Chapter presentations (1-3) handout for your class colleagues 4-page paper
Day Three	Learning Assignment #2- Children’s Spirituality	<i>Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey</i> <i>Articles discussion</i> <i>Communication dev.</i>	Chapter presentations (4-6) Developmental theories presentations
Day Four	Learning Assignment #3- Child Advocacy	<i>Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey</i> <i>Articles discussion</i> <i>Toxic stress</i>	Chapter presentation (7-10) Research on theories, child advocacy and spirituality
Day Five	Learning Assignment #4—Children’s Ministry Leadership	Leadership and ministry articles	Final project on Ministry leadership Presentations of projects

Students with Disabilities

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), it is the policy of North Park Theological Seminary to provide

appropriate and reasonable accommodations, or academic adjustments, and services to students with a documented disability to help ensure an equal educational opportunity. Students seeking these services should contact Ms. Laura Ebner Student Services Learning Specialist at 773 2445737 or email her at lmebner@northpark.edu at the earliest possible time with supporting documentation. If you believe you might have a disability that negatively impacts your educational performance, but have never been diagnosed, you are encouraged to meet with her to discuss your needs.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

The community at North Park University promotes a commitment to integrity in all areas of life. In the case of breaches of academic honesty such as plagiarism or cheating on examinations, the matter will be reported to the Dean of Faculty/Academic Dean. Students should be advised that normally in cases of academic dishonesty or plagiarism the penalty can range from receiving a failing grade for the assignment to expulsion from the seminary. For the full policy, please see page 21 and 22 of the seminary academic catalog.

Computer Use Statement

Students may use computers in class under the condition that they will use the computer only for purposes related to the course that day. All programs such as internet use, solitaire and other games, email, and any others not related to the course should not be open during class time. Such programs cause unnecessary distraction for you and those sitting around you in the class.

Incomplete/Course Extensions

Incomplete and course extensions may not be granted by the professor past the final day of exam week and are granted only for very exceptional reasons. Requests for course extensions must be made to the Instructor. Grades of "incomplete" are granted at the discretion and judgment of the faculty of the course in question. See page 18 of the Academic Catalog for the full policy.

Harassment Policy and Title IX

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against, or involved in sexual violence should contact the Dean of Students (773-244-6222) or Director of Human Resources (773-244-5601) for information about campus resources and support services, including

confidential counseling services. As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty are legally obligated to share information with the University's Title IX coordinator in certain situations to help ensure that the student's safety and welfare is being addressed, consistent with the requirements of the law. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of sexual assault, relational/domestic violence, and stalking. Please refer to North Park's Safe Community site (<http://www.northpark.edu/Campus-Life-and-Services/Safe-Community>) for contact information and further details.

Possible Topics

Prepare a handout for church teachers, parents, and caregivers to help them deal sensibly with how children process and/or come to faith. Do your homework in literature but don't make the handout read like an academic paper. You want to inform and give ideas. Your literature background will be from the readings and searches you have done in the previous assignments. One of the best ways to approach this task is to think of 1-2 questions that people have about this issue.

Consider child development—especially cognitive and social development—in relation to the teaching task. Prepare a handout to help those designing learning experiences for elementary-age or preschool children to see the relationship of child development to learning and to be aware of the problems that can occur when teachers don't understand the way children think and relate to others.

Consider the epidemic of violence against children. Drawing on resources above, prepare a handout to help teachers, caregivers, and parents understand the nature and scope of the problem, the effects of violence on the child's development, and to stimulate them to get involved in do-able ways.

Consider a particular group of special needs children (intellectually gifted, mentally challenged, developmentally delayed, learning disabled, physically challenged, emotionally disturbed). Research literature that provides helps for those who live and work with such children. Prepare a handout for parents, caregivers or teachers with concrete suggestions.

Consider the challenge of children as part of the worshipping community—especially in churches with a limited or inappropriate concept of worship. Draw on literature about children and

worship and children and spirituality. Prepare a handout to help a church board think through questions such as the following: How are children in this church learning the meaning of worship in this church? Is what the children are learning about worship adequate, or even biblical, as they observe and participate in this church's worship services?

Consider the differences between "cognitive" and "experiential" forms of learning—sometimes understood as passive versus active learning. Consult literature on this issue and prepare a handout to help church teachers ponder their attitudes about how children learn, and about the connections between the way they teach and the way they select and develop learning activities.

Note: There is a tendency in contemporary curriculum publishing to view active learning as fun (as in gimmick) without thinking seriously about the importance of active learning for substantive Bible learning and spiritual development.

A flurry of literature and film presentations has appeared reporting on the "infant's brain" or the "child's brain". Develop a handout for parents, caregivers, and children's leaders concerning the implications of the research and the reporting for parenting and teaching and learning.

Much of the developmental literature and material on children's ministry is written from a Western perspective. To what extent does it make a difference that you are working with children from another culture? Search literature that is exploring the relationship of multiculturalism and child development and learning. Prepare a handout to stimulate discussion among church members about issues that arise for children's ministry if we take culture seriously.

Howard Gardner's research on "multiple intelligences" has influenced curriculum development and classroom teaching. Examine the most recent writing on multiple intelligences (he keeps adding to the list) and prepare a handout to stimulate discussion among parents, caregivers, and teachers about its application to the design of learning experiences in the church.

Guide to Observing the Behavior of School Age Children

1. Select a child to observe for 15-20 minutes. During this time make notes about the,
 - (a) extent of the child's attention span. What holds her or his attention? What seems to cause a shift in attention?
 - (b) nature of the conversation and behavior directed to the teacher.
 - (c) apparent cause for any uncooperative, aggressive, overactive, or disruptive behavior.
 - (d) ways in which the child interacts with her or his peers.

2. Listen to the children's language. What does their use of language suggest to you about their cognitive development, social development, emotional development? What can you discern from the children's verbalizations about cognitive development?
3. What types of activities are the children engaged in? How do the boys and girls relate? What different types of roles are apparent in the group?
4. Observe the children's activity. How do they explore and manipulate their environment? What different levels of skill in physical dexterity and social intercourse do you observe? Note examples of the kinds of behavior exhibited when a child confronts a problem.
5. How do children initiate contact with other children? How do other children respond? How do the children settle conflicts?
6. In what ways do the children express emotion? What kinds of things do the children find pleasant? Unpleasant? What do you observe about the children's curiosity, frustration levels, acceptance of limits, responses to new or unusual situations?
7. What does the arrangement of the environment indicate about the teachers' awareness of child development?
8. In what ways does the teacher(s) manage the behavior of the children and how do they respond?

Interview Questions for Children's Ministry Leaders

The following is intended as a guide to help children's ministry leaders gather information and feedback about the ministry. This kind of interviewing is recommended at least once a year to help you focus concerns and ideas as they are expressed by the people most directly involved in the ministry. For purposes of this course, select one or two areas, or a sampling of questions from the various areas, and interview as many people as convenient.

Background

Select what you believe to be the most appropriate 5-6 questions for your situation. These questions will become the structure for your interview. As you listen, be alert to additional probing questions you should ask that are not on your list. Avoid Yes and No questions. In the preliminary moments of the interview, ask questions that will help you gather background experience on the persons interviewed (what they have done previously in ministry, where they served, and so on). Ask about skills, interests, motivation. Be as relaxed as possible.

Areas for the Interview

Questions about the Facility

1. In what ways does the facility restrict or enhance your work?
2. As you think about your teaching space, what improvements would you like to see?
3. Describe how you see the children responding to the space? What indicates that they find it attractive? Welcoming? Interesting?

Questions About the Administrative Structure

1. To what extent are you able to communicate your concerns, ideas, and so on without difficulty?
2. Describe the working relationship with your superintendent, children's coordinator, director of children's ministry? (Use the appropriate titles for the situation.)
3. Describe the effectiveness of your committee/administrative structure. What improvements, if any, would you suggest?

Questions about Their Perceptions of the Task

1. What do you perceive your role to be as a teacher? A leader?
2. As a teacher, how would you describe the role of the children's ministry leader? As a children's ministry leader, how would you describe the teachers' role?
3. How do you feel your work fits into the overall strategy and mission of the church?
4. What indicates to you that the church as a whole is sufficiently aware or unaware of the children's ministry?
5. What problems, concerns, needs would you identify? Talk specifically about those that you believe can be addressed.
6. What strengths can you identify in the children's ministry?

Questions about Teaching and Learning

1. What do you do each week? Walk me through a typical morning experience with the children.
2. As you observe the children each week, what perceptions do you have of what they are learning? How they are developing?
3. In what ways do assess what is happening in the lives of the children? How and when does the staff discuss the nature of your work with you? What satisfies you in your work? In other words, when do you most feel that you are working effectively?
4. What do you like about the curriculum? What are the limitations of the curriculum for your present situation?
5. What feedback have you heard from other teachers or children about the curriculum?

How do the children seem to respond to the material?

6. What different approaches have you used in the teaching program over this past year? In what ways does your department encourage variety in learning experiences? Under what conditions would you be open to trying alternative approaches to teaching and learning?
7. Describe the typical teaching and learning experience in a children's class.
8. To what extent is there coordination with the weekday programs, or other aspects of the children's ministry? In what ways could or should these programs reinforce each other?
9. What feedback do you get from the children about their experiences here? How do they respond in class?
10. What kinds of experiences are planned for the children outside the regular program?
11. In what ways do classes interact with each other? For example, do the older children interact with the younger children?
12. How do you use the Bible in teaching? How do you see it used in your department?
13. What kind of turnover do you have in your class (classes)? What are some of the variables that affect the attendance of the children?

Questions about Training/equipping

1. What do you feel you do best in teaching? In leadership?
2. If you had to identify 2-3 areas of development or skills that you would like to develop over the next few months what would they be?
3. What, if anything, causes you to feel most inadequate in your work?
4. What additional resources would help you with your work?
5. How comfortable are you in a situation where you are asked to lead a child to Christ, or talk with a child of divorce, or help a child who has experienced death or terminal illness?
6. What would be the best way for you to get training in the specific skills you would like to develop as a teacher?
7. If there's anything that most affects your morale as a teacher, what would it be (positive or negative)?

Questions about Personal Development

1. In what ways have you grown through this ministry experience?
2. In what ways has your spiritual life been enriched because of this ministry?
3. What aspects of your work frustrate growth?
4. What aspects of your work contribute to your growth?

Questions about Planning

1. How would you improve the communication in your department?
2. What would it do to your department's teaching effectiveness if you were able to spend some time in planning certain things in advance?
3. How would you describe your sense of being part of a team? In what ways would you like to

see your department function more as a team?

4. Describe a situation where you feel that advance planning would have helped a situation.
5. How much time are you actually spending in your ministry responsibilities with children?

Questions about Involvement of the Congregation

1. To what extent does this congregation include the children as part of the congregation? What indicates to you that the children have a sense that they are part of this community?
2. What ideas do you have for helping the congregation understand their responsibility in the nurture and development of children?

Questions about Community Contact

1. In what ways are you reaching out to the children/families in this community?
2. Assuming that church programs are not going to attract the majority of persons, what ideas do you have for outreach?
3. What is the composition of your classes -- unchurched? Churched?

Three Foundational Areas for Productive Children's Ministry

1. A personal conceptual model of the children's ministry. Each child's pastor will construct the conceptual model differently. However, common elements are likely to include the following considerations:

Understanding that education does not equal school, what do we know about learning? What elements are important in the spiritual, personal, faith development of children? For example: *meaningful worship* (children seeing and experiencing the people of God in authentic worship); *learning and making commitments* (children living in a way that is guided and informed by God's precepts and principles); *authentic service* (children involved in significant ministry in the congregation or community); *relationship in community* (children in relationships across ages, social strata, ethnicity, culture, and so on).

Relationships and mentoring are important for children, but should be understood in three dimensions: (a) adult with child which is more directive and involves guidance and shepherding, (b) peer mentoring (child with child), and (c) mutual mentoring where child and adult can contribute something of value to each other. What is the nature of the context that contributes to all of the above? Children should be developed and nurtured in caring communities: families, congregations, neighborhoods, schools, and so on.

1. The major domains of leadership responsibility. The major domains of leadership include creating climate, anticipating direction, promoting the ministry, and discerning and equipping leaders.

Creating climate has to do with embodying the values and spirit of the ministry. The personal presence of the children's leader is important, as are the attitudes and concrete behaviors of support, encouragement, and a "can do" spirit. Three realities are embedded in this task: (1) matters about which the leader can do nothing, but where growth is possible; (2) matters that the leader can address even though it is difficult; and (3) matters for which the leader has direct responsibility. In the areas where the leader has influence, *simple tasks* include, dealing with frustrations and felt problems; assessing communication procedures; interviewing, observing, and discerning patterns; determining what the decision making levels are; communicating procedures and policies; profiling the ministry in ways that are honest and factual, but that allow for the emotional; being present, to say thank you. *Slightly more difficult tasks* include, sharing values and alternative ideas; experimenting with different models; creating ways for the whole congregation to get involved (e.g., special events, intergenerational learning, open houses, visiting members of the congregation, prayer partners, and so on); involving people (and children) in evaluation and experimentation; profiling the ministry in appropriate ways. The *most difficult tasks* of the leader include, helping the church understand that children are part of the church and not just attached to it through programs; developing ministries that don't "warehouse" children; not entertaining or shepherding exclusively, but obligating growth,

participation and responsibility; developing leaders and not getting bogged down in program details; educating the staff about the importance of the ministry.

Anticipating direction entails noting trends and patterns in the ministry—being alert to those indicators that signal it is time for something new or time to assess an existing ministry. The children’s leader is a skilled observer and listener. He or she is also able to name issues and the realities of the situation. The leader visits volunteers, parents, and selected members of the congregation as often as possible. Children’s perspective on the ministry should also be sought. Questions that seek information about the ministry—its effectiveness and its limitations—as well as conversation about one’s spiritual and ministry development are appropriate.

Promoting the ministry is largely about modeling what you want to see others doing with children. If there is a “slogan” for the ministry, the leader embodies it. The children’s leader also takes responsibility in helping volunteers with the oral presentations (e.g., announcements) and written materials (e.g., bulletin inserts, letters) given to the congregation. If the leader is not skilled at speaking or writing, then he or she should seek out someone in the congregation or community who is. All written materials in particular should be checked for clarity and appeal. Parents and members of the congregation and community can be invited to participate in children’s events, or to act as an audience for meaningful performances.

Discerning and equipping leaders is one of the more vital responsibilities of the children’s leader. The section, “The Flow of Children’s Ministry Leadership” provides more detail but, in essence, the leader in a new situation is at first a manager of details. To avoid the danger of becoming a micro-manager, the children’s leader must soon recognize (discern) those capable of leadership. The children’s pastor, because he or she is committed to the development of people, provides experiences for growth and empowers the person to undertake leadership tasks. The skill of being able to pass on responsibility to another while staying in touch for support and ideas is difficult to learn but necessary. The children’s leader facilitates the formation of children’s teams so that the volunteer leader is not alone in the ministry. Finally, when leaders are involved in ministry and dealing with matters that were once the responsibility of the children’s pastor, he or she is free to move on to new ministry—to blaze new trails.

Certain hazards are often not readily apparent to the children’s ministry in the areas of leadership responsibility. Consider that the children’s leader describes his or her responsibilities in these ways: “At the core of my ministry are the issues of purpose, commitment, conviction, and values that guide what I do and am. Then, I see my time and energy invested in the following ways: (a) investing in the development of people; (b) seeing, naming, broadening understanding, educating, and facilitating process; (c) giving oversight to programs and ministries—sparking ideas and caring for detail; (d) finally, I am concerned about my personal, professional, and spiritual development.” Though children’s pastors will describe these tasks differently, these statements are typical.

However, in the reality of the situation, giving oversight to programs can overwhelm almost everything else. When this is allowed to happen, the other areas are diminished and the children's minister will, inevitably, experience burnout.

The flow of leadership responsibility. In most churches, the children's minister will work primarily with adults; and the number of volunteers that he or she relates to will often be more than in any other ministry of the church. As such the children's minister is a key person in the leadership development responsibilities of the church. This section describes a flow of responsibility for the children's minister who will be involved in the development of leaders across a period of time.

In the initial stages of a ministry or program, the children's minister will be highly visible in order to establish a presence; to communicate frequently, in whatever ways are appropriate to the church, what the children's ministry is becoming; and to discern volunteer interest in and aptitude for ministry responsibility. The children's minister will manage more detail than normal at this stage for several reasons: (a) to ensure that the tone, vision, procedures, and so on, of a developing ministry are a suitable foundation for ongoing development; (b) to model the culture, climate, and standards of the ministry; (c) to establish the processes whereby others will be able to express their opinions, judgments, perspectives on the ministry; and (d) and to ensure that the communications used to describe the ministry are clear and compelling.

While in the managing detail stage, the children's minister *must* communicate with and observe volunteers in order to discern those able to assume leadership responsibility, and to discern those able to take over some of the detail tasks. This stage in the flow of responsibility requires intentionality simply because, for many leaders, managing (or micro-managing) details is satisfying. It may be the only activity that has some sense of closure! As the children's minister helps volunteers find avenues of ministry and leadership and assume the care of details that are part of ministry, a subtle sensitivity is necessary. Volunteers want to be as close to the action as possible and will get frustrated quickly if they have to be involved with detail that is unsatisfying—especially if they see this as the job of the children's minister (“What are we paying you for?”). Therefore, in working with volunteers ask: “Should I enlist a support person to relieve this volunteer of unnecessary detail work; or is this task an important skill that the volunteer can develop and that will give him or her satisfaction as the task is carried out?”

In time, the director of children's ministry will be able to call out and develop volunteer leadership for major ministry areas. These leaders will be given authentic responsibility for that area. Then the children's minister will be able to move into a development and training role and can be the point person for new ventures. In this way, the children's ministry continues to grow, and the children's minister avoids getting buried by administrative details and responsibilities.

The skill at this stage is to be able to discern that which is part of the ongoing responsibility of the children's minister and that which can be undertaken by a volunteer leader. In most cases, even the ongoing responsibilities should involve some consultation with volunteers for reasons that should be obvious. The extent of the ongoing responsibilities will differ with differing situations, but generally include some or all of the following:

The children's minister, in consultation with others . . .

Articulates a philosophy of children's ministry.

Develops long range Bible learning and Christian life development goals for children's curriculum.

Gives direction to curricular development and learning opportunities for children.

Calls out and/or develops persons for leadership in major ministry positions.

Consults with volunteer leaders in coordinating the various ministries.

Works with ministry leaders to evaluate the various aspects of children's ministry.

Represents the children's ministry for children, volunteers, parents and congregation, staff, church board and congregation.

Gives direction to the Children's Ministry Team.

Ensures that the children's ministry is profiled before the congregation.

Helps the congregation see the relationship of children's ministry to the total ministry of the church.

Articulates the values that undergird the children's ministry.

Discerns and oversees the enlistment of those interested in and able to serve in the children's ministry.

Works with ministry leaders to fill in the staffing gaps that occur through the year.

Fosters and encouraging climate for volunteers in their ministry with children.

Plans/coordinates equipping opportunities for volunteer staff.

Recognizes and resolves problems. Oversees the children's ministry budget. Assists in the coordination of special events.

Oversees the acquisition of supplies and equipment.

Ensures appropriate care and management of the children's ministry facilities.

Develops new initiatives in children's ministry as lay leaders assume existing administrative functions.

Networks with other children's ministry professionals.

Keeps abreast of resources and development in children's ministry.

Ministry options and responsibility

What are the existing ministries in your children's ministry that could be led by a lay leader?

Some examples are:

Preschool worship leader

Preschool scheduler

Elementary Learning Program Coordinator

Nursery Coordinator

Associate Nursery Coordinators
Summer Activities Coordinator
Weekday Outreach Program Coordinator
Puppet Ministry
Others?

Ministry support personnel

There will be need for persons to assume a supportive role in various ministries. Presumably these persons will be “supported, encouraged, and developed” by the ministry lay leader. The following are sample areas where volunteers could serve as support persons for the children’s ministry. As the children’s ministry develops, more opportunities for volunteer involvement will become available.

Sunday school teachers
Associate or assisting worship leader
Second hour (Sunday) teachers and support persons
Weekday ministry co-leaders
Summer ministry committee and staff
Elementary or Early Childhood craft leader(s)
Puppet leaders
Monthly nursery assistance

Additional support personnel could help with the following:

Cleaning toys in early childhood areas
Washing nursery linen
Snack preparation Handyperson
(light carpentry)
Occasional help for cleaning “bee”
Computer center maintenance
Room decoration—wall decoration

New initiatives possible as major ministry leaders come into place:

Developing a 3-5-year plan for Bible learning and Christian growth experiences for children
Developing a comprehensive Bible memory program that helps children understand the meaning of what they are memorizing.
More extensive development of a Teacher Resource Center (workshops could be conducted making use of the Center)
Music and the Arts (drama, dance, creative writing, art)
Encouraging relationships between children and adults
Missions’ education
Computer Lab
Working with adult and youth ministry leaders to coordinate family education experiences

Developing a summer ministries program (adding day camp, fun outings, and so on to the summer program)

Working with pastoral staff in planning for outreach

As the children's ministry develops, further ministry personnel opportunities could include:

Children's Literature Team

Children's Choir Leaders

Drama Team

Sacred Dance Team

Children and Art

Coordinator of "Adult Friends" program

Mission's Planning Team (for Mission's Month and other initiatives to teach the children about missions)

Computer Development Team

Children's Newsletter Team

Bible Learning Project Team

Bible Memory Team

Craft Team for Grade School (second hour)

Summer Ministries Team

Outreach Team Family

Ministry Team

Lent/Easter Team

Advent/Christmas Team

Representative Titles

Hundreds of titles are produced every year relevant to children and ministry with children. The titles below are merely representative of some topics that may be of interest as you learn more about children's ministry.

- Anderson, Herbert and Susan Anderson. 1994. *Regarding Children: A New Respect for Children and Families*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press.
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- Berryman, Jerome. 1995. *Godly Play: An Imaginative Approach to Religious Education*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Publishers.
- Bunge, Marcia (ed). 2001. *The Child in Christian Thought*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Caldwell, Elizabeth. 1996. *Come unto Me: Rethinking the Sacraments for Children*. Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press
- Calkins, Lucy. 1997. *Raising Lifelong Learners: A Parent's Guide*. Reading, Massachusetts: Perseus Books.
- Carlson Greg, Tim Ellis, Trisha Graves, and Scottie May. 2007. *Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation: Four Views*. B&H Publishing Group
- Coles, Robert. 1990. *The Spiritual Life of Children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company
- _____. 1997. *The Moral Intelligence of Children: How to Raise a Moral Child*. New York: Random House.
- Dawn, Marva. 1997. *Is it a Lost Cause? Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Duckworth, Eleanor. 1996. *The Having of Wonderful Ideas*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Edelman, Marian Wright. 1994. Cease Fire! Stopping the Gun War Against Children in the United States. *Religious Education*. 89 (Fall): 461.
- Eibner, Janet and Susan Walker. 1996. *God, Kids, and Us: The Growing Edge of Ministry with Children and the People Who Care for Them*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing.
- Gardner, Howard. 1991. *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach*. New York: Basic Books.
- Garland, Diana 1996. *Precious in His Sight: A Guide to Child Advocacy* (second edition). Birmingham, Alabama: New Hope.
- Gobbel, Roger and Gertrude. 1986. *The Bible: A Child's Playground*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Goldman, Robert. 1965. *Readiness for Religion: A Basis for Developmental Religious Education*. New York: The Seabury Press.
- Halverson, Delia. 1994. *Helping Children Care for God's People: 200 Ideas for Teaching Stewardship and Mission*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Hay, David with Rebecca Nye. 1998. *The Spirit of the Child*. London: Fount, a Division of HarperCollins Publishers.

- Healy, Jane. 1994. *Your Child's Growing Mind: A Practical Guide to Brain Development and Learning from Birth to Adolescence*. (second edition) New York: Doubleday.
- Heusser, D.B. and Phyllis Heusser. 1985. *Children as Partners in the Church*. Valley Forge: Judson Press.
- Hyde, Kenneth. 1990. *Religion in Childhood and Adolescence*. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press.
- Juengst, Sara Covin. 1994. *Sharing Faith with Children: Rethinking the Children=s Sermon*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Jutila Craig, Jim Wideman, and Pat Verbal. 2006. *Children's Ministry in the 21st Century*. Group Publishing.
- Jones, Timothy. 2000. *Nurturing a Child=s Soul*. Nashville: Word Publishing.
- Kohn, Alfie. 1993. *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A=s, Praise, and Other Bribes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- McGinnis, Kathleen. 1994. *Celebrating Racial Diversity*. St. Louis, MO: Institute for Peace and Justice, 4144 Lindell Blvd., #124
- Molnar, Alex (ed). 1997. *The Construction of Children=s Character*. Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press.
- Myers, Barbara. 1997. *Young Children and Spirituality*. New York: Routledge.
- ____ and William Myers. 1992. *Engaging in Transcendence: The Church=s Ministry and Covenant with Young Children*. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press.
- Oppenheimer, Helen. 1994. *Helping Children Find God*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing Company.
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- Pritchard, Gretchen Wolff. 1992. *Offering the Gospel to Children*. Cambridge: Cowley Publications.
- Ratcliff, Donald (ed). 2004. *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Spirituality and Applications*. Cascade Books.
- ____. 1988. *Handbook of Preschool Religious Education*. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press.
- ____. 1992. *Handbook of Children=s Religious Education*. Birmingham Alabama: Religious Education Press.
- Rogoff, Barbara. 1990. *Apprenticeship in Thinking: Cognitive Development in Social Context*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Singer, Dorothy and Tracey Revenson. 1996. *A Piaget Primer: How a Child Thinks* (revised edition). New York: Penguin.
- Stewart, Sonja and Jerome Berryman. 1990. *Young Children and Worship*. Westminster/John Knox
- Stonehouse, Catherine. 1998. *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books.
- Trelease, Jim. 1995. *The Read-aloud Handbook* (4th edition). Penguin Books.
- Trelease, Jim. 1999. *Read All About It*. Viking Press.
- Waldman