



Office for Elementary School Catechesis and Faith Formation
DEPARTMENT FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
DEPARTMENT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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MEMORANDUM

To: Elementary Religion Teachers, Catechists, Parents

From: Holly Joy Penzenstadler, Director for
Elementary School Catechesis and Faith Formation

Date: March 15, 2012

The following is a sampling of Children's Literature that has been reviewed and found to be suitable for augmenting the Catholic Vision of Love Curriculum in the Diocese of Pittsburgh and appropriate for use in the Religious Education environment, the Catholic School, and, of course, in family settings.

Each book listed includes a summary or recommendation that may help the catechist, parent, or teacher to introduce the corresponding lesson. Teachers and catechists may want to insert the recommendations directly into the covers of the books, as each of the recommendations are sized appropriately.

This is not an exhaustive list. There are many other samples of Children's Literature available that are also suitable. We would ask that you would submit your recommendations and suggested uses to cvol@diopitt.org for review.

Thank you to the dedicated teachers, catechists, and parents who suggested many of the books and activities found in this list.

THE
CATHOLIC
Vision of Love
Diocese of Pittsburgh

Primary Grades:

Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades PreK-K Lessons-Any.

☞ **“I Was So Mad”** by Mercer Mayer

Key Concepts:

Rules keep us safe.

Sometimes, following the rules isn't what we want to do.

The Virtuous Life: “Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.”

There are a lot of ways that we can respond when we get mad.

What are some of the things that we can do?

Build the virtue of Prudence/Wisdom: What could have happened if he ran away?

Primary Grades:

Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades PreK-K Lessons.

☞ **“DC*Super Friends: Heroes United!”** by Dennis “Rocket” Shealy

What are some of the ways that you can be a Super Hero for God's People?

Super Hero Virtues:

Fortitude: Superman is strong. I bet he is brave too.

Superman see through walls with is x-ray eyes, but God can see our hearts.

Temperance: Batman can use his high-tech gadgets whenever he wants, but he makes sure that he only uses them when he needs too. Even though he has so many cool things at his fingertips, he practices temperance and pays attention to people more than big boy toys.

Prudence: The Green Lantern can create anything that he can imagine, so he guards his imagination wisely. He knows that it's his job to protect the Earth from all the dangers out there, so he keeps his imagination in check using the virtue of prudence.

Justice: Aquaman uses the virtue of Justice to protect life in and out of the water and recognizes the dignity of each created person. Justice reminds us to treat others fairly and to give them their due—which is respect. Justice also reminds us to give God what is due—worship!

The Superheroes are fun ways for us to consider what Heroic Virtue is, but they are just for fun. Jesus, the REAL superhero, is even more amazing.

(Segue into a story about how Jesus did some really great things, this time, read right from the Gospels...)

Primary Grades:

Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL K-Grade 1, Lesson 1.

☞ “You are Special” by Max Lucado

This story has some pretty tough names in it. Connect it with the lesson in noticing how different names can be. Take this one step further by noticing how different people can be. Say something along the lines of, *“Sometimes we all worry about what other people think about us, but we’re all a little or a lot different from each other. Let’s see what Punchinello can teach us...”*

Activity: Using **stickers**, of any color, shape, etc., challenge the students to “stick” good things to remind each other about what makes them special and different. Make sure to put the stickers on a *thing* not a *person* based on the story in the book!

If your class uses name tags on the desks, students can stick stickers on nametags, however, students **must tell students what they like about each other:**

Give each student 5 stickers and tell them to LIKE each other, and you as the teacher can start this by LIKING something different about each student as you distribute the stickers.

Examples:

“I like your socks today”

“I like that you always share with me”

“I like the way your color”

Primary Grades:

Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades K-1, Lesson 2

☞ “The Tallest of the Smalls” by Max Lucado

This is an emotional story about fitting in and what makes people special. The main character in the book experiences things that the little ones can relate to.

I would use this book after the 2nd lesson, at the end of the class and ask questions relating to the lesson throughout the book, even the questions from the lesson are suitable, *“What would make you feel that way?”* *“Have you ever felt like him?”* *“How would you make him feel better?”*

Primary Grades:

Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades K-1, Lesson 1

☞ **“I’m Gonna Like Me”** by Jamie Lee Curtis and Laura Cornell

This story tells how different people really are, with a very positive message about why “*I’m gonna like me*”. The pictures are really vibrant and there are opportunities to stop and get the students involved, like, “*Who has lost a tooth?*”, “*Show me the bravest face*”, “*Let’s all twist and stretch straight up to the sky*”, and at the end, “*How about you?*” will lead them into the crown activity. My recommendation is to read the whole book once to the students, perhaps at the end of the previous week’s class. At the next week’s class, start with that book again and tell them to “*Listen very carefully, I will need your help with this story*”.

Primary Grades:

Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades 2-3 Lesson 1

☞ **“I Like Myself”** by Karen Beaumont

This book is short and simple. Invite the students to act out each of the descriptions (fast, slow, etc.) and point to their eyes, ears, nose, toes. Another way to approach this book is to get the students to repeat after the reader. A follow up idea is to ask the students to draw a picture of themselves with as many silly features as they can, and draw the connection back to God loves us and created us with a purpose, even if we don’t always know what that is. No matter how we draw the picture of ourselves, God always sees us the best and loves us just as we are.

Primary Grades:

Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades K Lesson 3.

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades 2-3 Lesson 4.

“Little Miss Helpful” by Roger Hargreaves

Key Concepts: FORGIVENESS AND TELL AN ADULT

Have you ever tried to help someone, but it didn’t work?

Has anyone ever tried to help you and THAT didn’t work? What did you do?

Sometimes, we all make mistakes. When that happens, what should we do?

-We SAY ‘I’m sorry’, right?

-And when someone says, ‘I’m sorry’ to us, what can we do?

Sometimes, it’s important to tell mom or dad or teacher about when someone hurts us or makes a mistake. How do we know when to tell adults?

Segue into personal safety lesson.

Primary Grades: Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades K-1, Lesson 4

☞ **“Bernstein Bears”** by Stan and Jan Bernstein

The Bernstein Bears books always have a great moral message. Try using one of these to augment your lesson if you are having a tough time figuring out how to begin or end the -segment.

The Bernstein Bears Learn About Strangers

The story begins when Sister Bear greets every stranger that she meets. When cautious Brother Bear discourages this, Sister begins to view all strangers as evil. Papa Bear shows articles from the newspaper such as, "Stranger Bothers Cub", "Missing Cub Found", "Chief Grizzly Questions Stranger". Mama Bear uses a barrel of apples to explain the concept of bad apples. An apple that looks bad on the outside is perfect inside. Another apple looks fine on the outside, but inside it's infested with worms. Brother goes to the town green to launch his pusher plane, where Sister picks wildflowers. Just as they are about to go home, somebody drives up with a radio-controlled plane. Brother starts talking to the stranger, and Sister arrives on the scene and stops Brother from accepting the stranger's offer of a ride to send the plane in the air and follow it in the car. Rules for children on strangers are posted on the last page.

Primary Grades: Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades K-1, Lesson 4

☞ **“Bernstein Bears”** by Stan and Jan Bernstein

The Bernstein Bears books always have a great moral message. Try using one of these to augment your lesson if you are having a tough time figuring out how to begin or end the -segment.

The Bernstein Bears Forget Their Manners

The story begins when Mama sees that the family have gotten into a habit of forgetting their manners, being rude, and impolite. They do stuff like playing with their food, fighting, calling each other names and other impolite things. Mama then makes the family do a politeness plan where whoever does one impolite thing would be penalized by having to do work or chores. For example when Papa tries to compliment the idea, he accidentally interrupts Mama and is penalized by having to dust the house. Brother and Sister hate the idea so they decide to pretend to be polite already so that Mama will call the plan off, but it results in them becoming humble, polite and remembering their manners again while Papa on most occasions gets penalized for being impolite. During a shopping trip Papa gives the cubs advice about manners until he almost forgets his, when he bumps another car when it stops for a family of ducks crossing. Sister reminds Papa about his manners and Papa thanks her and makes up with the crashed victim.

Primary Grades: Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades 2-3 Lesson 1 and 2

☞ **“The Crayon Box that Talked”** by Shane DeRolf .

This story reveals how our differences are part of how we experiences life and relationship with each other. Each of the crayons in the story has a personality and a role in the final picture, however, they don’t always get along. The emotions experienced by the crayon characters are similar to the feelings that are common to many young students in classroom and play group dynamics. This book can be a launching point or a tie in for lessons One or Two.

Activity Connection: In addition to color identification, this activity can be enhanced by a craft and a song.

Craft: Have students cut out or color a crayon with a face and display.
(Source: www.supercoloring.com)

Song:

Red is the color of the **red, red** rose.

Green is the color of the grass that grows.

Yellow is the color of the sun that shines

Way up high in the **blue, blue** sky.

Jesus, you sure know how to color.

Jesus, you sure know how to color.

Jesus, you sure know how to color.

Color my life with **love**.



Primary Grades: Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades 2-3 Lesson 3.

☞ **“A Bad Case of Stripes”** by David Shannon

This is a humorous story about Camilla Cream and her quest impress other people and be liked by everyone. Throughout the story, Camilla becomes unrecognizable, and it is only through truth that she becomes the person she was meant to be: Camilla Cream.

This story supports the learning objectives of Lesson 3:

- Identify positive (good effects) and negative (bad effects) of peer pressure
- Recognize his/her uniqueness as a person who is continually growing and changing, by responding (or listening to responses of others) to the teacher’s question: “What are some other ways you have grown?”
- Show appropriate ways to react in a stressful situation by responding to questions about stories.
- Recognize healthy and unhealthy ways to express feelings by reacting to situations in pictures and stories.

This story is best used as an introduction to the lesson, by using launch questions like:

“Have you ever felt like Camilla?”

“Who here likes eating lima beans? Would you tease someone who likes them?”

“What would you do if your classmate came to school with stripes?!”

“What’s scary about the first day of school?”

Primary Grades: Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grades 2-3 Lesson 1 or 3.

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grade 5, Lesson 3.

☞ **“Have You Filled Your Bucket Today”** by Carol McCloud

This book tells the story of Bucket Filling, and can be connected with the lessons listed above by instituting the idea of Bucket Filling in the classroom environment.

To summarize, the Bucket Filling concept is that we all carry around invisible buckets, which is where we store our good thoughts and feelings, when our buckets are full we are happy and when our buckets are empty then we are sad. By filling each others buckets (gratitude, compassion, kindness, positive comments, etc.) we fill our own and by 'dipping' in each others bucket (negative comments, bullying, put downs, etc.) we are dipping into our own too.

Other teaching tips and free classroom resources can be found at: <http://www.bucketfillers101.com/>

Primary Grades: Recommended books to build CVOL Lessons

Lesson Connection: CVOL Grade5, Lesson 4

☞ **“The Giving Tree”** by Shel Silverstein

After reading this story to the students, ask them why they think that the author choose this title. Facilitate a brief discussion about how the boy treated the tree, how the tree treated the boy, how they think that the tree felt, and how they think the boy felt at the end of the book. Now ask them about friendship, giving, and family love. Introduce the lesson with this story and draw the connection about unselfish/generous love as the lesson progresses.

Additional activity: Have students identify people who are giving to them and write prayers of thanksgiving. Then, have students identify ways that they can be more giving and write prayers of intention.

Have a suggestion?

We welcome your *best practices, recommendations, and lesson planning ideas!*

Please send your book recommendation and book suggestion to CVOL@DIOPITT.ORG for review.

Together, let us do something beautiful for God.

