

Suggestions for Registration Forms About Support Needs

I am often asked by concerned parish catechetical leaders, “Why don’t parents tell us their son or daughter has a disability?” It’s a fair question. When you ask for information, it would be nice to receive it, so you can provide the appropriate supports. Knowing why you don’t get it may help. Some of the reasons are:

- Parents want some place where their son or daughter is, ‘just one of the group.’
- Parents may be concerned about how the information will be used or shared. Will it be shared with people beyond the catechetical office and catechist?
- It may sometimes have to do with how the information is requested.

A critical task for you as a parish catechetical leader is to establish relationships with the families and learners you serve. Parents need to trust you if they are going to share such information about their sons and daughters. Trust with you, your intent, and how you will use the information. Setting the stage for such questions will be important and is done through the way you present your program, how you talk about its purpose, what type of relationships you foster with the parents, and what their sons and daughters’ experience is like. All parents would be interested to know that you are seeking to provide an engaging environment to nurture lifelong faith development for their children.

Questions to consider:

- Does your son or daughter have any accommodations in school? Yes/no
- Does your child’s school recommend particular learning strategies for him or her? Yes/no
- Do you have any recommendations on teaching or motivation strategies that would be helpful? Yes/no
- Does your son or daughter:
 - Have any concerns with social relationships or situations? Yes/no
 - Use alternative communication devices or methods Yes/no
- If you answered yes to any of the above, please describe below in the space provided. [provide a few lines for their response.]
- Please know that I am happy to meet with you if you wish to discuss this in more detail to provide an environment in which your child is comfortable and engaged.

If you are concerned about space, I still recommend including something like the above stated goal about providing an engaging environment to nurture lifelong faith development. Then:

- Does your child have any learning, behavior or communication support needs? Yes/no
 - Provide space for a few sentences
- Please know that I am happy to meet with you if you wish to discuss this in more detail to provide an environment in which your child is comfortable and engaged.

Notice language is focused on support/accommodation needs for learning, communication and behavior? There is no diagnostic language, which I strongly recommend avoiding. Please feel free to call me with any questions or concerns.

