

Diocese of Green Bay: Department of Education  
Foundational Catechetical Certification  
Frequently Asked Questions



***Why the changes?***

After a couple years of using the existing USCCA-based certification plan (called “Theology 101” in draft format), feedback revealed that there were wide variances in its use and application. Courses and requirements were not administered in a consistent manner around the Diocese. Further, the lesson plans were never officially adopted. In 2011, a work committee of experienced catechetical leaders was formed to review the process/ lesson plans and make improvements.

***What’s different?***

The Diocese of Green Bay will no longer refer to its certification using the terms Basic, Intermediate and Advanced (or Advanced Renewal). These terms had set up a false hierarchy that implied that the Christian Morality (The Faith Lived) pillar of the Catechism, for instance, was more advanced or important than the Creed (The Faith Professed) because Morality was the focus of “Advanced” Certification while Creed was [just] “Basic”.

In the newly refined plan for certification, a person will take 6 separate-but-equal components of study. They encompass the four pillars of the USCCA plus a component on Methods and a component on Bible basics (all of which came out of recommendations of the work committee). The Methods component will have two tracks: one for teachers (Faith Integration) and one specifically developed for Catechists. Once all six components are completed the person will have achieved Foundational Certification.

***How is this seen as an improvement?***

First, the coursework will be consistent. If a person misses one session of a component, they can easily make it up by attending that session at a different location without the concern of it being redundant or out of context.

Second, since the components can be taken in any order, there will be many more choices in locations, times, dates in which to take the components.

Third, in many locations, the components will be open to the general parish community. This should widen the pool of prospective, qualified catechists.

Last, this plan stresses continuing education/life-long learning, rather than learning in spurts (i.e. taking one course every five years).

***What about administrators/teachers/catechists that already have Basic, Intermediate or Advanced Certification?***

The appropriate components will be granted to anyone who has completed USCCA-based certification courses. For instance, if a person achieved Basic Certification by taking a ‘Theology 101’ Basic class, he/she will have fulfilled Creed component. Likewise, someone who took the Intermediate course will have fulfilled the Liturgy & Sacraments component. Advanced or Advanced Renewal Classes within the ‘Theology 101’ context will merit credit for the Morality component of Foundational Certification.

Everyone seeking Foundational Certification and Ongoing Formation will be encouraged to complete any and all of the six components they have not experienced in the past.

***What if a person has a college degree in Theology or related subject, or has completed the Diocesan Commissioned Ministry program?***

As in the past, college/commission ministry transcripts (unofficial copies acceptable) may be submitted to the Education Department (Religious Education Director) for consideration. Credit for appropriate components of Foundational Certification will be granted based on college coursework successfully completed.

***What are the costs associated with this plan and who’s paying them?***

Each teacher/catechist should have access to a copy of the USCCA during the component sessions. If a trainer is brought in for the component, there may be a mileage expense that the host school/parish should be prepared to pay directly to the trainer. Other incidental expenses may include refreshments, if offered, and copying of lesson materials. The Bible component utilizes the DVD series “Quick Journey through the Bible” which if not already owned by the host, may be borrowed from the Department of Education. Additional supplemental materials for each component are optional.

***Why are trainers only allowed to lead one specific component of certification?***

Trainers will be able to concentrate their preparation and personal supplemental reading/study on the component which they'll be responsible for leading, thereby relieving them of the burden of covering much more material in such depth. This concentration should make them subject matter experts and better able to present the material in an engaging and enlightening way. It also means that the people taking the components will get to listen to more than one trainer over the course of the certification process and be exposed to different teaching/presentation styles.

***Why would a school teacher be required to take a Methods component for catechetical certification?***

The Methods track for teachers (Faith Integration) will delve into much more than classroom methods, by introducing and developing the ideas of integrating our Catholic faith into all subject areas.

***What comes after Foundational Certification (is there an Advanced Renewal equivalent)?***

Once a person has achieved Foundational Certification, the plan calls for Ongoing Formation which may be as simple as taking Foundational Components that may have been missed along the way, or taking a pre-approved Adult Faith Formation Course or appropriate (Catholic) college/on-line course that meets the minimum number of instructional hours (ten).

***How will I know what component to offer my teachers/catechists first?***

An easy solution would be to offer one of the components that are unique to this plan (i.e. Bible or Methods). Another way to decide is to find out which components most of your teachers/catechists already have accomplished and then offer the component that the fewest have had in the past.

You can check the current status of your teachers/catechists' certification by submitting a list of their names to the Department of Education and requesting their records in terms of Foundational Certification.

***Can the components be offered in ten 1-hour sessions or two 5-hour sessions instead of five 2-hour sessions laid out in the lesson plans?***

The lesson plans are written specifically for five 2-hour sessions. If used in another format, the same material must be covered in its entirety and participants should be made aware that if they miss any of the sessions, making up the session may not be as convenient because they'd need to find another parish/school offering the component in a similar format.

***How can I help?***

First, you can adopt and promote a positive attitude about this plan for certification. This refined plan builds on the former plan and makes improvements in continuity and content. This plan reflects the Department's efforts to make continual improvements in the certification process while maintaining our conformity to the Bishop's Pastoral Letter:

*"Realizing Our Dream for the Call to Holiness – We will deepen our commitment to disciple people and teach them to pray, to teach them to cultivate their relationship with Christ, with the Blessed Mother, and with the Saints to help them to see that within the church there is such a rich treasury of wisdom and knowledge about the spiritual life."*

Second, if you feel called and qualified to be a trainer of one of the certification components, please submit an application to teach. Application materials are on our website. [Link] They are due by March 25, and train-the-trainer sessions (one 3-hour session) will be held in various locations in the Diocese this spring/summer.

Third, you can start preparing now to host certification training for your catechists/teachers. Consider opening the sessions up to the parish in general and to fellow catechists/teachers of neighboring parishes/schools.

Last, please keep our efforts in your prayers. Forward any questions you have or encounter to the Department of Education. The Department of Education strives to serve you in your ministry!