

Religious Education
Mini Teacher Manual

2014-2015

Table of Contents

Your Name:

About this Mini Manual 3

UUCY’s Religious Education Mission Statement 3

Administrative Information 4

Communication & Support 4

Emergencies 4

Child and Youth Protection Program 5

Fieldtrip Guidelines 8

Materials & Supplies 8

Multimedia Equipment 8

Food in the Classroom 9

Sunday Morning Activities 10

A Typical Sunday 10

An Atypical Sunday 11

In the Classroom 13

Growing Souls—Teaching *Children* but Raising *People* 13

Teacher Role and Responsibility 13

Lesson Planning and Preparation 14

Classroom Interactions 15

About this Mini Manual

This manual is verybasic. In no way does this manual cover everything you will need to know. Please continue to ask questions as they arise. I will be glad to work with you throughout the year to answer questions, offer suggestions, or help you avoid problems.

## Finding Information About Our Religious Education Program

[UUCY Religious Education Website](http://www.uucy.org/children--youth-religious-education.html)

## [UUCY RE Families Website](http://uucyreligiouseducation.weebly.com/)

[Teaching Documents](http://www.uucy.org/religious-education-documents.html)/Forms

[RE Teachers Webpage](http://uucyreligiouseducation.weebly.com/teachers.html)

*If you read the content on the preceding links, you will have a comprehensive overview of the UUCY religious education program.*

## Contacting the Interim Director of Religious Education (iDRE)

My standard work week is Sunday through Thursday, 9 AM to 4 PM. If you have any questions or concerns, come see me on Sunday morning or you may contact me:

1. Through the Teacher’s Feedback Form in the Teacher’s Notebook (in every classroom)
2. E-mail anytime: dre@uucy.org
3. Call or leave a voicemail message at 717-845-8212 x104 during normal business hours
4. When you need my prompt attention, you may call me at home in the evenings at 314-239-5694

***Steven Mead***

Interim Director of Religious Education

# UUCY’s Religious Education Mission Statement

Our mission is to grow souls of beauty, compassion, and wholeness. To offer a rich, Unitarian Universalist religious education experience that engages the mind, nourishes the soul, and uplifts the UUCY community and its neighbors. We are a vibrant RE program serving the needs of a church where children and youth are a vital part of the church's mission and community life.

Administrative Information

# Communication & Support

## Teacher Orientation

In early September, the iDRE conducts a Teacher Orientation. This informative meeting is a must-attend for teachers, regardless of how much experience in the program you may have. Teachers have the opportunity to learn what’s new for the upcoming teaching year, to speak from their experience, and to meet with teammates and work out scheduling issues.

**Teacher Connections**

In addition to our September Teacher Orientation, we meet all-together twice yearly—a “Teacher Connection” (usually in Nov and March)—to share experiences, work through any issues, celebrate successes, and schedule the immediate month’s ahead.)

## Communicating with the RE Committee

The Religious Education Committee supports the iDRE in administrative and curriculum matters, helps recruit teachers, facilitates connecting the congregation with the RE Program, and assures that the RE Program serves UUCY’s mission and vision.

## Communicating with Teaching Teammates

Telephone and/or email contact between teaching team members is an important part of planning and communication. In addition, good notes on the Teacher’s Feedback Form can alert fellow team members to what has been happening on the Sundays when they are not in the classroom. These past reports, with any comments from the iDRE can be found in your Teacher’s Notebook in your classroom.

## Communicating with Parents

Teachers are encouraged to talk with and directly email parents. Church DB, UUCY’s shared electronic database has current contact information for members and friends. The iDRE has a list of most registered parents’ e-mails and can provide this list upon request. Teachers are encouraged to call parents and discuss issues or triumphs.

# Emergencies

## Children's Health and Medical Issues

Student health and allergy issues are noted on the Class Attendance Roster in your Teacher’s Notebook in each classroom.

## Fire Extinguishers

Are located in each area of our buildings – take the time to find one nearest your classroom, and be sure you know how to operate it. Do not attempt to extinguish a fire larger than a garbage can — in case of a fire bigger than this, notify adjoining classrooms, evacuate immediately, and *then* notify the sanctuary.

## In Case of Evacuation Due to Fire or Fire Drill

1. ASSIGN AN ADULT TO CHECK CLOSETS, CORNERS, BATHROOMS OR OTHER HIDING SPOTS in your area, in order to gather stray children
2. Classrooms closest to the fire *just get out*, don't worry about anything else, not coats, not paperwork, not *anything*
3. Alert other classrooms and people in the area and calmly evacuate the building
4. PULL THE FIRE ALARM BOX ON YOUR WAY OUT THE EXIT DOOR
5. Take children to the *far* side of the labyrinth *away* from the building
6. Keep children together and check to be sure that you have with you all the children listed as present
7. Notify the fire/rescue personnel immediately if a child is missing
8. Do **not** go to the parking lot or get in your car to leave campus!
9. KIDS ALWAYS COME FIRST.  Their safety is paramount, then adults, and only at the end, the property

## Band-Aids and Minor First Aid Supplies

Basic first aid kits are in every classroom; oral analgesics have all been removed. Notify the iDRE of all incidents requiring first aid attention before the family leaves the grounds. Fill out an **Incident Report Form** (available in your Teacher’s Notebook in your classroom) and bring to the DRE’s Office.

## Bodily Fluid Clean Up

OHSA approved spill kits are in each classroom—use them as necessary! These kits contain latex gloves. **ALWAYS** use latex gloves to clean up vomit, urine, blood and/or other bodily fluids. Advise church staff that there has been a spill so that follow-up cleaning can be done.

**Always Notify the iDRE or another staff member**

**(if the iDRE is unavailable)**

**of any major or minor injury, or other emergency.**

**REFER ALL INQUIRIES FROM MEDIA**

**TO THE MINISTER THROUGH THE *CHURCH OFFICE* NUMBER**

**⚫⚫⚫**

**PLEASE, DO NOT SPEAK TO THE PRESS**

# Child and Youth Protection Program

To help protect children, UUCY has adopted a Child and Youth Protection Program. It is important that all UUCY paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent sexual abuse against children. The Protection Program includes the Purpose and Definitions for these guidelines, outlines Protection and Prevention, and sets forth content for our Acknowledgement Form to be signed by people working with our children. The Program is required reading for all staff and volunteers.

## Religious Organization Paid Staff & Volunteers Behavioral Guidelines

All volunteers and paid staff will observe the following guidelines:[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Do not provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law to minors.
2. To the extent possible, UUCY events that are co-educational will have both male and female chaperones.
3. At least two paid staff or volunteers will be in the room when minors are present. With the exception of the nursery room, doors will be left fully open if one adult needs to leave the room temporarily and during arrival to the class or event before both adults are present.
4. Avoid all inappropriate touching with minors. All touching shall be based on the needs of the individual being touched, not on the needs of the volunteer or paid staff. In the event a minor initiates inappropriate touching, inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.
5. Never engage in physical discipline of a minor. Volunteers and paid staff shall not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse of any kind.
6. If you recognize an inappropriate relationship developing between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor and adult to the DRE for appropriate investigation and action.
7. When one-on-one pastoral care is necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments.
8. If you observe abuse of a minor or inappropriate conduct, report it to the Minister, Interim Director of Religious Education, or the President of the UUCY.

## Arrival and Departure

* All parents/guardians of children in Nursery through 2nd grade are asked to escort their children to and from class and may be released only to their parents/guardians unless they have made prior arrangements directly with the teacher.
* If you have “stragglers” when class is over, please help escort them to their parents.
* Notify the iDRE if you have arrival/departure concerns.

## “Two Adult” Guidelines. To the *extent possible*:

* Any time that children are present, other than your own, at least two unrelated adults must provide supervision. This includes classrooms, playgrounds, and field trips. Adults who are married or in committed relationships are considered “ONE” adult.
* Please tell the iDRE if another adult is needed.
* If you must assist a child in the bathroom, always leave the door to the classroom or hallway ajar.
* When you are in the bathroom with a child, make sure your co-teacher knows where you are and, if at all possible, that they are within hearing range.
* Make sure two adults are present during dismissal. Never stay in a classroom with just one child while waiting for parents to arrive.
* Please check with the iDRE when arranging field trips or outside activities.

## Background Checks

All volunteers with responsibility for the direct supervision of children and youth must consent to a criminal background check. The procedure and scope of this check will be clearly explained to all applicants. This consent will be kept on file in the RE Office. Results of the background checks remain confidential and under lock-and-key. Background checks are conducted bi-annually.

## Reporting Child Abuse

Anyone may report suspected child abuse or neglect. PLEASE: If you suspect a child has been abused, inform the iDRE and Senior Minister. They are here to support you and our families in crisis.

**Physical Abuse**

Citation: Cons. Stat. Tit. 23, § 6303

‘Child abuse’ means any of the following:

* Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator that causes nonaccidental serious physical injury to a child under age 18
* Any recent act, failure to act, or series of such acts or failures to act by a perpetrator that creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to a child under age 18

**Neglect**

Citation: Cons. Stat. Tit. 23, § 6303

The term ‘child abuse’ includes serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life, including adequate medical care, that endangers a child’s life or development or impairs the child’s functioning.

**Sexual Abuse/Exploitation**

Citation: Cons. Stat. Tit. 23, § 6303

The term ‘child abuse’ means any of the following:

* An act or failure to act by a perpetrator that causes sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under age 18
* Any recent act, failure to act, or series of such acts or failures to act by a perpetrator that creates an imminent risk of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under age 18

**Emotional Abuse**

Citation: Cons. Stat. Tit. 23, § 6303

The term ‘child abuse’ includes an act or failure to act by a perpetrator that causes nonaccidental serious mental injury to a child under age 18. ‘Serious mental injury’ means a psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment, that:

* Renders a child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic, or in reasonable fear that his or her life or safety is threatened
* Seriously interferes with a child’s ability to accomplish age-appropriate development and social tasks

If you suspect that a child is being abused, abandoned, or neglected, contact the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, call your local child protective services agency, or call 9-1-1. Here is a link to the Pennsylvania state agency for children services and the telephone number to report child abuse and neglect in Pennsylvania:

**Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare**

[**http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/forchildren/childwelfareservices/calltoreportchildabuse!/**](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/forchildren/childwelfareservices/calltoreportchildabuse%21/)

Toll-Free: (800) 932-0313 TDD: 866-872-1677 If you do not get an answer at the above number, call Childhelp (800-422-4453) for assistance.

UUCY Ministers (subject to the limitations of § 3490.14. Privileged communication.) and the Interim Director of Religious Education are mandatory reporters.

# Fieldtrip Guidelines

* When planning church-sponsored trips, whether around the church or away from the church, please alert the iDRE and parents as far in advance as possible.
* When children are to be taken off the church grounds, even if it is just for a stroll down the block, the parent/guardian’s permission must be obtained and a liability/medical release from our files must be in the possession of the “lead” teacher in case of emergency.
* If there is no release on file, the child MAY NOT participate in the field trip. NO EXCEPTIONS.
* All drivers must be 25 years of age, have a current driver’s license, and proof of current insurance.
* There must be one seat belt for each passenger and the driver. No sharing of seat belts is allowed.
* Only full-sized or mini-vans may be rented. Fifteen-passenger-vans are not to be used.
* Whenever possible, two adults should be present with the children on trips, and there should be one adult per eight (8) children/youth. This includes transporting children to/from church events (exception: one adult may drive with several children, if driving as part of a caravan of vehicles traveling together and other adults are in that caravan).
* The RE staff needs to know all details of the event for our records.
* Standard permission forms may be customized for your particular event. We can distribute event information and direct parents to permission.
* Please allow at least two weeks’ notice prior to your outing and let us know if special information needs to be included (such as where to meet, what to bring, what to wear, etc.). Whenever possible, it is best to allow more than two weeks so that we can use several modes of communication including publication in the weekly church eBeacon, our websites, and conversation with students and parents in person or by phone.

# Materials & Supplies

Each room has an inventory of basic supplies and craft materials. Two supply cabinets in the RE lobby contain most everything else you may need. Certain lessons may require special materials and these you may purchase with the expectation of reimbursement upon submitting an Expense Voucher Form to the Church Treasurer, or alternately, with sufficient lead-time, the iDRE will purchase them for you. When classroom supplies begin to run low, use your Teacher’s Feedback Form to alert the iDRE to purchase necessary supplies.

# Multimedia Equipment

Multimedia suites are in grades 5-12 classrooms; they can:

* Play DVDs or CDs through the DVD player
* Play MP3/iPod audio through the sound bar
* Connect with the Internet--either through the TV or the DVD player--so YouTube is accessible
* Connect/slave and display your conventional laptop to the mounted flat screen; (you can search and type better from your laptop)

This equipment can enrich and augment current curricula. For help in using, please ask any 5th grader—they *know* these things!

# Food in the Classroom

Some of our children have food allergies or are sensitive to certain foods. UUCY has a NO NUT policy. Food allergies are posted on attendance sheets found in your Classroom Notebook. Gluten free snack options are available in each room—if these are exhausted, please inform the iDRE.

Because sensitivity to a food allergen may differ between children and because families may have different levels of risk that they are willing to tolerate, it is important to keep them informed so that they may decide how to respond when snacks are offered. Children with food allergies are learning how to deal with it independently, but parents still need to be informed and involved.

Sunday Morning Activities

# A Typical Sunday

Sunday morning activities vary. Please pay attention to the weekly email from the iDRE, and check the Teachers page of the RE Families website *to be sure you know the day’s plans*. Our Sunday morning RE program *typically* begins with PreK-4th grades in the sanctuary through the Children’s Moment, *but* *it may begin elsewhere!*

## Classroom Learning

From September through May, children four years of age and up attend worship services or other activities per the [RE Program Calendar](http://uucyreligiouseducation.weebly.com/re-calendar.html). On classroom learning Sundays, we recommend that you arrive 30 to 15 min early, depending on the complexity of the lesson’s activity, to prepare your classroom for the day’s lesson. If needed, please enlist the aid of the iDRE to help you prepare your classroom.

## The “Teacher’s Notebook”

The Teacher’s Notebook is located in each classroom in a clear plastic pocket next to the door. This binder contains important and useful documents that you may need, such as:

* Attendance Sheet/Enrollment Roster
* Teacher’s Feedback Form
* Accident/Incident Form
* RE Program Calendar (see Exhibits)
* RE Teacher’s Schedule (which changes often!)

Forms available to give to Parents as the need arises:

* RE Program Brochure
* RE Registration Form
* Parent Feedback Form

Use the Teacher’s Feedback Form to tell the iDRE:

* How things went today; if there are issues that need attention
* To order supplies
* Tell the iDRE to contact a parent for registration
* Tell the iDRE that you need to talk, etc.

At the end of class, leave the binder in the door pocket in your room, the iDRE will collect it and then transfer your attendance to a master attendance record, review and act on your Teacher’s Feedback Form, and replenish any used documents.

## Sunday – Arrival

* Arrive early and check your classroom for any special supplies you requested.
* Set up your class area.
* Greet students and visitors and make them welcome. Ask them to wear their name tags
* Guests should get visitor name tags—each room has a supply of these
* Take attendance—on your attendance sheet, put a check mark by students’ name.
* Get visitor’s names and record them on the attendance roster. If a visiting child begins to attend regularly, try to get the parents to register the child in the RE program.
* Verify your attendance after the lesson starts (add to it as late comers arrive).

## Sunday – Class

Children appreciate a routine and framework for their day. For the most part, classes for all ages follow roughly the same pattern:

1. Greeting
2. Chalice lighting/opening ritual
3. Story/discussion/Sharing Circle/Reflection
4. Activity/song
5. Joys and Concerns (optional)
6. End of class wrap-up discussion

## Sunday - Closure

* If you find that your lesson ends too early, consider additional activities or stories, impromptu “chain” stories, or craft activities. *Do not release the children early.*
* Remind students of next week’s class theme and any special activities.
* Ask students to help you clean up the area and put things away.
* Place regular homeroom supplies back on the shelves where you normally keep them. Special supplies should be returned to the RE Office for the iDRE to return to inventory.

## Sunday – Dismissal

* Dismissal is at 11:45 or when the worship service is over, whichever is *later*.
* Regardless of the time, do not dismiss students unless the service has ended.
* Speak with the parents as they pick up their children. Share good news or observations with the child and parents. This is not a time to share concerns about behavior. Always try to end the day on a good note. Inform the iDRE of any serious concerns either in person or on the Teacher’s Feedback Form and read the response the following Sunday so that we may work on the situation as a team.
* Talk with your team members about how the lesson went.
* Check to see how accurately you estimated the timing of the activities in the lesson (this will help your future planning).
* Fill out the Teacher’s Feedback Form in the Teacher’s Notebook binder. It is an important form of communication between you and the iDRE. Be sure to put down the good as well as the bad. The iDRE reads and initials every report.
* Is there anything the iDRE needs to know? If so, *discuss it with the iDRE* as well as note it on the Teacher’s Feedback Form.
* Submit any supply request on the Teacher’s Feedback Form.
* Please escort to their parents any primary age children who have not been picked up by 11:50 or bring them to the iDRE who will help track down wayward parents.
* Contact other teaching teammates if there is important information to be shared or lesson plans to be passed on.

# An Atypical Sunday

Most Sundays begin in the sanctuary. However, there will be Sundays when we will not. Most Sundays we will meet in classrooms in our various grade cohorts—some Sundays we will not. Except for Winter Intercession, these atypical Sundays are teaching Sundays and unless instructed otherwise by the iDRE, your team is responsible for that day’s activity, whatever it may be. It is beyond the scope of this Manual to address all the variations that may take place on an atypical Sunday, be they Social Service, Children’s Chapel, or Special Theme Sunday. *Those Sundays that deviate from our programmed classroom learning will invariably be accompanied by additional instruction and information from the iDRE.* Please pay attention to the RE Program Calendar, the weekly email from the iDRE, and the weekly eBeacon *to be sure you know the day’s plans*.

In the Classroom

# Growing Souls—Teaching *Children* but Raising *People*

What you are doing in our classrooms is not just teaching; it is much bigger than simply providing instruction. You are engaged in ministry to and with the children and youth of our church. *You are growing souls*. While it is true that you are helping each individual grow, the important thing to remember is that you are doing this by creating and nurturing a “classroom soul” by:

* Working collaboratively with the children and co-teachers to build a safe community and a meaningful Sunday morning experience for the children.
* Encouraging reflection, questioning, deep listening, and authentic speaking.
* Fostering full engagement through practices both playful and serious.
* Providing clear expectations regarding appropriate behavior.
* Taking steps to ensure that the health of the group stays strong even when that means correcting individuals who do not comply with expectations.

## Team Planning and Communication

We have adopted *team teaching* consisting of four teachers per grade level. The key factor for the success of the team teaching approach is communication among the team members. Be sure to exchange one another’s e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and times when you are available to receive calls.

It is essential for teams to work out their own teaching schedule. You may wish to use what is called "the revolving four.” Over four weeks, teachers A&B, B&C, C&D, and D&A work together. With this plan, everyone is on for two weeks and off for two, but each teacher coming in is working with someone who was there the previous week. Experience tells us it’s best if you work out your own schedule rather than have it imposed upon you by the iDRE. You may elect to specialize among yourselves (or not); you may want to consider who has special talent at songs and creative dramatics, who is best at leading craft activities, and who can best organize a social action project. Keep the iDRE informed of who will be teaching so that the master teacher schedule can be maintained.

As your team works together, you may find that one or two people may take on more of the time and responsibility than other teammates, perhaps to the extent of appointing someone Teamleader. One person may function more as an occasional participant than as a team member. These evolutions of relationships between team members are natural, but try to be sensitive to shared responsibility and the possibility that teammates might not be comfortable with their role on the team.

# Teacher Role and Responsibility[[2]](#footnote-2)

## RE Teacher Job Description

The position of RE Teacher is a part-time volunteer position under the direct responsibility of the iDRE and working in close cooperation with the Religious Education Committee.

Briefly, the position requires approximately 1.25 hours of time on Sunday when RE classes are in session. In addition, 1-1.5 hours per week will be spent in lesson/activity preparation and occasional meetings.

## Finding a Substitute Teacher

Make sure your team agrees upon a monthly or multi-week schedule of lesson topics and who will teach them. Send a copy of your teaching schedule to the iDRE. Use the Teacher’s Feedback Form to provide information about substitutes, planned lessons, and needed supplies.

It is best to have a member of your team fill in for you when you can’t teach. If you must be absent, make sure your teammates know. Please contact team members as soon as you learn you cannot be present on an assigned Sunday. If a team member cannot swap and cover for you that day, please arrange for a substitute. A list of substitutes for you to contact is on the RE Program Calendar. ***It is your responsibility to line up a substitute.*** Make sure that teaching and curriculum materials are available to your substitutes. If your best efforts at this fail, contact the iDRE for additional assistance. *If you have less than 24 hours notice, please* ***call*** *both your teammates and the iDRE.*

Please let the iDRE know who your substitute will be, so that we are prepared for the change and know whom to contact if we need to communicate with them. We especially want to hear from you if you are experiencing severe illness, a stressful time, or family crisis.

# Lesson Planning and Preparation

## Lesson Planning Considerations

Questions to consider with your teaching team include:

What are the needs of the children? Consider group, individual, immediate, and long-term goals. What are the developmental needs and capabilities of the children?

1. What are the resource limits? Consider time constraints, classroom size, materials, and budget.
2. How do we plan? As a team, plan at least a month or two.
	1. Determine who will lead and who will assist each week.
	2. Balance the activities in the lessons by considering:
		* including large group, small group and individual activities
		* acting or discussing rather than lecturing or reading
		* creating work to decorate and personalize the room
		* celebrations
		* including community service projects
		* both large and fine-motor skills when planning arts and crafts, music, and creative movement
		* occasionally leaving the four walls of the classroom—hold class outdoors under a tree, etc.
		* inviting the iDRE, special guests, parents to class
		* opportunities for student leadership within lessons
	3. Write it all out.

## Steps in Lesson Planning

During the Week:

1. Look ahead. Spend time preparing and planning with team members for upcoming classes and seek help when needed.
2. Read the goals of the lesson and the materials needed.
3. For UUA Tapestry of Faith curricula, some prepared lesson guides exist—ask the iDRE. You may follow or deviate from these lesson guide suggestions at your discretion.
4. Read the entire lesson. Practice the activities at home!
5. *Decide on any changes you want to make. You will rarely have time to do all of the listed activities in the lesson (especially if you are working from a Tapestry of Faith curricula!). The authors who wrote the curriculum wanted teachers to have several activities from which to choose.*
6. Write down an approximate time schedule for each part of the lesson. Please do not write in curriculum.
7. Write down some additional activities for the students who arrive early or if the lesson ends earlier than you had planned. Examples of additional activities include:
8. Helping the teacher prepare materials before class
9. Draw a get well picture for a sick church member
10. Color a mandala
11. Work a puzzle
12. Make a collage
13. Check your email daily for RE program updates and announcements—especially look for the iDRE’s weekly *What’s Next?* e-mail that summarizes what is going to happen the next Sunday.
14. Feel free to call the iDRE if you have suggestions, questions or would like some ideas.

## Suggested Lesson Plan Format

People of all ages appreciate consistency. Ritual is one way of creating a sense of community while achieving an orderly classroom.

1. Greetings, introductions, nametags, attendance, and boundary breaker.
2. Chalice lighting ritual with opening words.
3. Use an attention grabber to introduce the day’s lesson – question, model, anecdote, artwork, etc.
4. Seek out what they already know and engages their curiosity. Use that as you continue the lesson.
5. The main lesson needs to include active student participation. It may include a combination of large group, small group, and individual activities.
6. Plan extra activities if time allows or if the regular lesson activities fizzle.
7. Closure – should include one simple statement related to the lesson, may include socialization or future plans.
8. Closing ritual – extinguishing the chalice and closing words.

# Classroom Interactions[[3]](#footnote-3)

## Pre-Class

* It is helpful for teachers to plan not to sit or stand together. It is ideal for teachers to arrange themselves so that some teacher has eye contact with each child and both teachers have eye contact with one another.
* You may need to alter the environment to suit your needs for the day. It is worth the effort.
* Remember that teachers need to show good attending behaviors; eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions all communicate to students your interest in what they have to say.
* Be aware of your body language!

## Opening

* Try to greet each person with a warm greeting or personal statement.
* Use the Opening/Body/Closing format: Tell them what you’re going to tell them. Tell them. Tell them what you told them.

## During Discussions

* Try to use open-ended questions. Avoid yes or no answers, especially when everyone knows the answer. For example instead of “Do all families have a mother and a father?” Try “Can anyone share a story about a family with only one parent?
* Discussion leaders don’t need to add new ideas or information all the time. It is helpful to use these techniques.
	+ Clarification: “So, what you are saying is. . .” “I hear you saying. . .” “In other words. . .” “Some of you feel that. . . while I hear others saying. . .”
	+ Use a simple response and wait. “Hmmmm. . .” “I see. . .” “Oh. . .”
	+ Focus on feelings, naming the feeling when possible: “That idea makes you angry. . .” “You get excited when. . .” “It’s sort of scary to think about that. . .”
	+ Don’t over-react to student over-reactions!”

## Closing

* Allow time for clean-up and putting the room back together
* This is the time to recap what you have told them or what they have discussed. Ask three critical questions:
	+ **What did we do here today?**
	+ **Why did we do it?**
	+ **Why did we do it here?**
* This is the time to let them know about next week’s activities.
* Consider sending them home with a “pocket thought” for the day. A slip of paper that recaps the day’s lesson or activity and goes in the student’s pocket. Parents will have a bit more of a clue what to talk about when the child reads the pocket thought.

## Managing Disruptive Behavior[[4]](#footnote-4)

Here is a set of successive steps to follow when handling a discipline problem. In certain cases, some of the steps may have to be omitted or changed, but generally, teachers should try these procedures in the order listed.

1. **Ignore**: The teacher must know when to be blind or deaf. An isolated or unobtrusive breach of discipline is frequently best overlooked.
2. **Look at the student and call his name gently**: if the child knows that he is being observed, his behavior may improve.
3. **Involve her in the lesson**: Distract the child from misbehavior by bringing her into the lesson. Ask her a question, preferably a not too difficult one.
4. **Move to be near the child**: Let him know that you are aware of his actions and are about to take any necessary further steps.
5. **Change her seat if necessary**: Remove her to a section of the room where her misbehavior is least likely to be encouraged. Give her a chance to calm down with a book, fidget toy, or other solitary activity removed from the rest of the class.
6. **Have a private conference with the child**: Make a calculated attempt to “reach” the child using all you know about his background and personality.
7. **See the parent.** The help of the parent and iDRE is enlisted in a parent/child/teacher “conference.” Sometimes suggestions made to bewildered parents are eagerly received with good results. Alternatively, the corollary may be true; the parent may know exactly the approach a teacher may use with their child to achieve a positive outcome.
8. **Isolate the child.** Remove the child from classmates and activities. The RE Committee can set policy regarding behavioral expectations and consequences in extreme cases. The child may need some time to sit with his/her parents in the Sanctuary or in the iDRE’s office with the iDRE.

Of course, there is no substitute for a well-planned education program based on developmental level and class needs. This eliminates a great number of so-called discipline problems.

1. Excerpted from the UUCY Child and Youth Protection Program [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Adapted from RE Road Map: An Administrative Guidebook for Religious Educators, Cindy Leitner (2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. RE Road Map: An Administrative Guidebook for Religious Educators, Cindy Leitner (2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. RE Road Map: An Administrative Guidebook for Religious Educators, Cindy Leitner (2006) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)