

Supporting Family Involvement

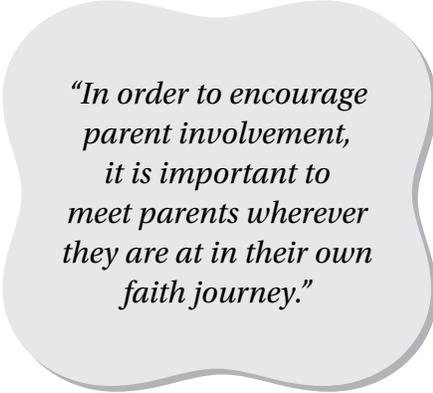
As the coordinator or director of the *Stories of God's Love* program, one of your tasks is to promote faith formation not only for the child, but the entire family. The Church recognizes parents as the primary educators of their children, so it becomes important to look for ways that might more effectively encourage and assist parents in this important role. The goal is to have a program in which parents and other family members are engaged and are active participants in the religious education of their children.

Welcome and Hospitality

In order to encourage parental involvement, it is important to meet parents at whatever point they are on their own faith journey. By being welcoming and always inviting them to ask plenty of questions, parents will feel more included and will learn to explore their own faith in more depth. Parents frequently do not feel confident in their knowledge of the Catholic faith, so they may be intimidated by the thought of becoming involved in the religious education of their children.

Understanding Diverse Family Systems

When working with parents, it is extremely important to be sensitive to the various family settings that exist in your program. Remember that families come in all shapes and sizes. Two parents, single-parent, divorced, separated, different religious practices. These are some of the many characteristics that define family settings which vary from child to child. Knowing the different family situations of the children in your program can help you to create language that is supportive and welcoming.



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A Variety of Resources and Activities

Most parents and caregivers of children at this age will be very enthusiastic about becoming involved in their children's education and continuing the lessons at home. They will likely

be eager and willing participants in learning how to best provide their child with a good faith foundation. Welcome families into the program and provide them with valuable suggestions on how to keep their family faith journey fresh and alive. In this way parents and caregivers will be supported and encouraged in their role as primary faith educators and will learn to openly model their love for God.

The Foundation for Future Involvement

By providing simple ideas to parents for how they can become involved in the faith formation of their children, you can engage parents in a way that can have a lasting effect. If parents can be helped to understand that they can indeed be actively involved in their child's faith formation and are given some simple tools to do so, they will be more likely to stay involved as the years progress.

The *Stories of God's Love* program contains rich parent resources that will help parents stay informed and involved with their child throughout the program. See the reproducible masters in the "Resources for the Family" section on pages 49-56 for additional activities and suggestions that will support families.