



Ministering to Special Needs Families

With Sr. Mary Catherine

March 6, 2025

Pope's Intention for March

For families in crisis.

Let us pray that broken families might discover the cure for their wounds through forgiveness, rediscovering each other's gifts, even in their differences.



Pastoral Statement of the US Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities

It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to persons with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together. To exclude members of the parish from these celebrations of the life of the Church, even by passive omission, is to deny the reality of that community. Accessibility involves far more than physical alterations to parish buildings. Realistic provision must be made for Catholics with disabilities to participate fully in the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations.¹

November 1978, revised 1989, 23



Sr. Mary Catherine on Ministry to the Family

It is a ministry to the whole family

- “thank you for all you do *for our family*” – cards from families in Advent to the community
- “we don’t do anything concrete for the families except feed the child through the teachers and we are there ourselves.”



Sr. Mary Catherine on Selecting & Training Teachers

- Look for teachers who are people of prayer
- Critical to not scare teachers off
- Make it as easy for teachers to start and coach them
- Better than OK – a book for parents
- Design each experience to the individual student and family



Discussion Questions

Share a **key insight or practice** you learned from past “success” or “failure” in serving Families with Special Needs.

What are **questions you have** about working with Families with Special Needs?



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NCPD

National Catholic Partnership
on Disability





Providing Support in the Struggle and Hope for Hard Times

Accepting the Gift provides Catholic special needs parents with the resources they need to thrive in their unique vocation.



Accepting the Gift

A Ministry for Catholic Special Needs Parents



ACCEPTING THE GIFT CURRICULUM GUIDE

AN ALL AGES AND ABILITIES
CURRICULUM FOR THE HOME

Amanda DeBroeck

Acceptingthegift.org

Parent and Parish Resources



USCCB Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities

General Principles

Guidelines for Particular Sacraments

“All persons with disabilities have gifts to contribute to the whole Church. When persons with disabilities are embraced and welcomed, and invited to participate fully in all aspects of parish community life, the Body of Christ is more complete.”



Fr. Roland Freeman on Sharing Faith

“Actions are what people hear.

These students take our feeling and our experience, and they own it as their own. As they practice it and they feel it, then it becomes their own.

They are able to communicate then, as Sister and I experience in these classes, with one another the very gift of their own love and their excitement.”



Fr. Roland Freeman on Training Teachers

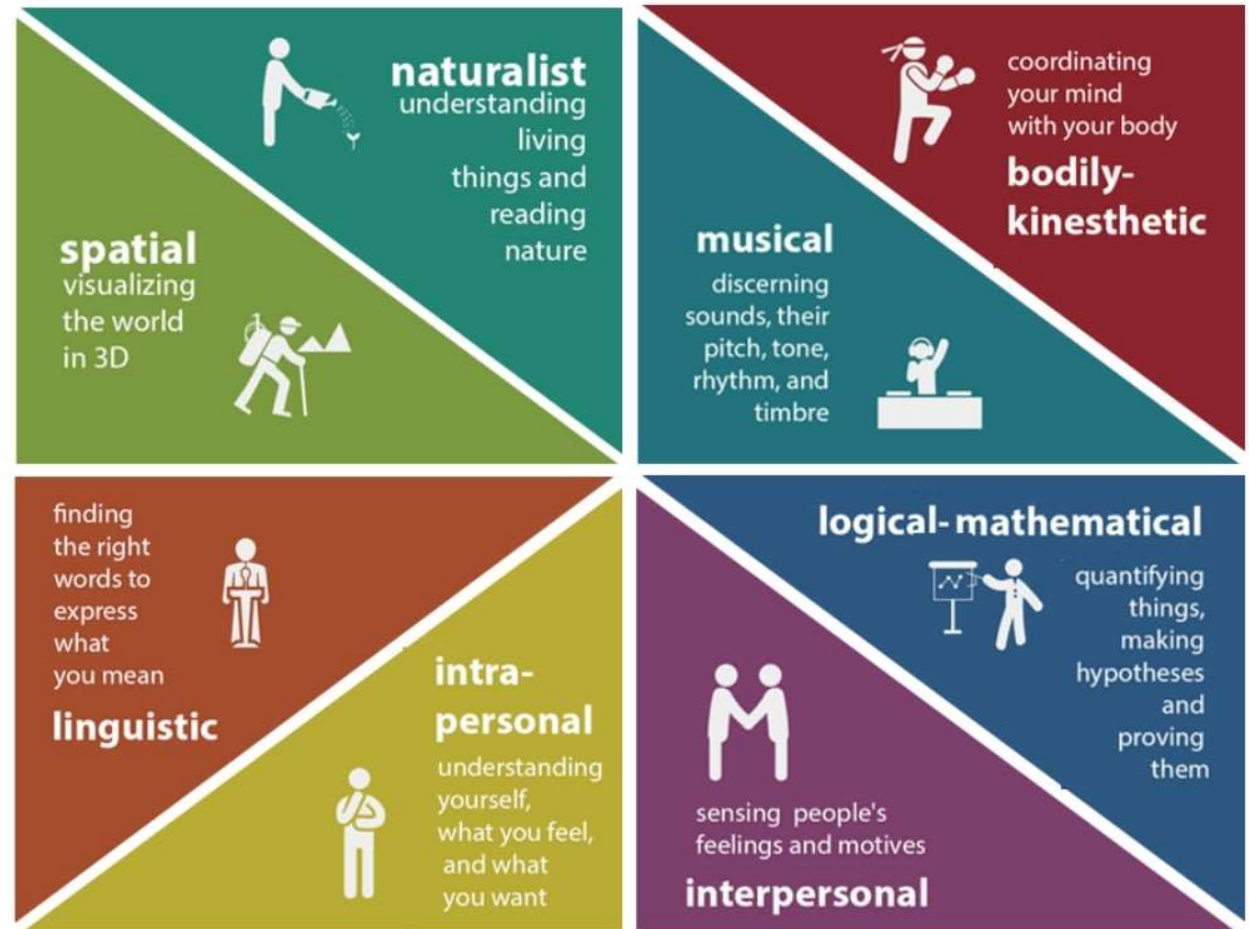
[Describing the disciples pointing to Jesus as the source rather than themselves]

“We help the teachers understand that witnessing to Jesus is witnessing to what we are trying to become ourselves. There is only one Christ, that’s Jesus. The rest of us are trying to become like him.”



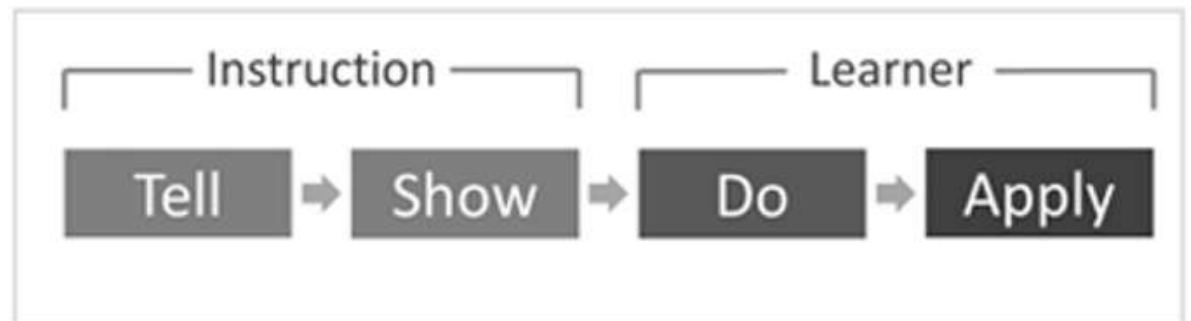
Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

*We do a great deal with music, with kinetic
and color sensitivity. – Fr. Roland*



Coaching New Teachers

THE FOUR BASIC STRATEGIES FOR CREATING EXCELLENT INSTRUCTION





THANK YOU!

