

# Seeking the Faith Quotient

## Discernment

God grants us wisdom through our experiences. God gives us knowledge through His word and the two together create understanding. This is very similar to how Educational Psychologists explain learning. The new information we attain through hearing or reading must be combined with what we know from our experiences to create new learning. This is why students who have a multitude of educational experiences outside of school tend to learn more quickly in school.

Discernment is being able to observe and take in information, to analyze information, to compare the situation with what God teaches and to make a wise choice. Discernment does not come easily or quickly. It is not granted to us at birth. We are blessed with discernment through God when He helps us learn from our experiences. When we teach children how to use God's teaching, how to learn from past experiences, and how to seek wisdom and understanding from God, we are teaching them the tools they need to make good judgments not only in learning but also in life decisions.

Students need discernment to learn to solve problems. Solving a problem requires more than factual knowledge. It is a complicated system of observation, using past experiences, being able to predict consequences of steps taken and being able to correctly apply factual information. We understand this when we realize that children who know their phonics rules and math facts do not necessarily score well on reading comprehension or math problem solving. Being able to solve problems also has an emotional component. Children who panic when faced with a challenge will be unable to access the intelligence they do have to solve the problem. Other children who cannot self-regulate will not be able to make the necessary observations or be able to make a plan to do the solving. Those of us who teach the faith can easily see how trust and obedience are two faith skills that are essential to discernment and problem solving.

Discernment also affects social skill development. Developing healthy social skills requires one to read and interpret social cues. This involves reading faces, understanding that different behaviors are appropriate in different situations and that many social "rules" are unspoken. Some students have great difficulty figuring out the rules that everyone else seems to already know. For these students, they need to learn more empathy so they can better become aware of the emotions and behaviors of those around them. They need to be able to see things from someone else's point of view. When we teach the faith and teach these children to repent, forgive and hope they begin to become more empathetic and more aware of accepted behaviors.

*For the LORD  
gives wisdom,  
and from His  
mouth come  
knowledge and  
understanding.  
Proverbs 2: 6*

But seek first  
His kingdom and  
His righteous-  
ness  
and all these  
things will be  
given to you as  
well.

Matthew 6:33

When you integrate the faith into everything that is taught and into every part of the school day you do much more than share the Gospel. God blesses your efforts beyond your religion class, and even beyond the faith development of your students. Through the teaching and learning of the faith skills of unconditional love, trust, hope, repentance, forgiveness, humility, obedience and discernment God works to strengthen the emotional skills of self-regulation, optimism, coping with stress, using feelings, solving problems, interpreting social cues, empathizing, and being accountable.

While this task can seem overwhelming it is important to remember that the job of completion is not ours but God's. We are His tools and He will equip us for the task. Continuing education is vital to maintaining our skills in teaching academics. Continuing education is also vital to maintaining our skills in teaching the faith. God has a plan for keeping his tools sharp. That plan includes regular worship, a healthy prayer life and the regular study of Scripture. Pray for God to develop your Faith Quotient even as

He uses you to teach His children.

## Group Discussion

1. What qualities in a student lead to good discernment?
2. Do those qualities make for a good class leader? Why or why not?
3. How does empathy help in making good decisions in social situations?
4. What is the consequence, in social situations, of not having empathy?
5. How does the ability to self-regulate improve the decision making process?
6. Can you think of students in our class that you would consider to be wise? What makes them wise in comparison to their peers?
7. Can you name students who obviously lack wisdom? What contributes to their lack of wisdom?
8. How can we teach discernment?

## Putting it into practice

### Teachers

On the left side of this piece of paper list the names of the students in your class. In the first column after their names list the faith skills/emotional skills that were already strong for each child. In the second column list the faith skills/emotional skills in which you saw improvement. In the third column list the recommendations you have for each child's parents or for their next teacher regarding their strengths and weaknesses.

## Putting it into practice

### Administrators

Take some time to reflect on this in-service material.

Was it understandable for your staff members?

Did you see evidence that they were using the principles discussed in their classrooms or in their relationships with each other?

What aspects of this tool were not helpful?

What would you do differently if you could repeat the program?

What other follow-up activities would be appropriate for your staff?

# Assessing learning with follow-up discussion

This activity can be used for a follow-up activity after teachers have completed classroom observations and all units have been completed:

Using what you have learned from this and the previous eight modules and from your own observations, complete the exercise below. Draw a line from each faith quotient to the emotional skill it supports. There will be more than one connection between them. For instance, teaching unconditional love will support both coping with stress, empathizing. In fact each faith skill could support each emotional skill. However, for purposes of this exercise think your connections through carefully so as to be able to defend your answer with an example from what you have learned or from what you have observed in your classroom.

Love	Self-regulation
Trust	Optimism
Hope	Coping with stress
Repentance	Appropriate use of feelings
Forgiveness	Solving problems
Humility	A sense of security
Obedience	Accountability
Discernment	Interpreting social cues

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