



Coordinator's Manual

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Printed with soy-based ink.

Nihil Obstat: Rev. William M. Becker, STD
Censor Librorum
14 September 1998

Imprimatur: Rev. Michael J. Hoepfner, JCL
Administrator, Diocese of Winona
14 September 1998

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The publishing team included Cheryl Drivdahl, copy editor; Barbara Bartelson, production editor; Hollace Storkel, typesetter; Proof Positive/Farrowlyne Associates, Inc., cover designer; Maurine R. Twait, art director; pre-press, printing, and binding by the graphics division of Saint Mary's Press.

The diagram on handout 9-A, "The Cone of Learning," is adapted from *Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching*, third edition, by Edgar Dale (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969). Copyright © 1969 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

The quotations on page 92 are from *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning*, by the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) (Washington, DC: USCC, 1991), pages 74–75. Copyright © 1991 by the USCC.

A Video Orientation for the Program Coordinator was produced by Mediawerks, Winona, Minnesota.

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Printed in the United States of America

Printing: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Year: 2007 06 05 04 03 02 01 00 99

ISBN 0-88489-458-4



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Introduction

Why This Kind of Manual?

A quick perusal of this manual makes it clear that it is unlike most manuals designed for coordinators of religious education programs. First of all, much of it has an open, “text-light” look. Second, rather than being in a narrative format, most of the manual has the character of a detailed outline. What’s going on here?

A little history: Over the last decade or so, Saint Mary’s Press published two major curriculums designed for use with parish religious education programs—the original Discovering Program, and the Sharing Program, which was designed for use with senior high youth. (The Sharing Program has now been replaced by Horizons.) For both the original Discovering and Sharing Programs, we published large director’s manuals. The manuals included extensive background on the theological and pedagogical foundations of the programs; descriptions of the developmental characteristics of adolescents; thorough explanations of the curriculum; and detailed programs for recruiting, training, and supporting volunteer catechists. These materials were all packaged in durable three-ring binders, and we even included audiotapes to assist in training. Very professional stuff. Users in general had two reactions to the manuals: (1) They universally praised them as “the best director’s manuals available.” And (2) they virtually never used them!

This last bit of news was discouraging, to say the least. Upon reflection, however, we found that it made sense. The manuals we had developed were so extensive that many directors apparently did not have the time to study them. And perhaps even more disconcerting, those who did read them were not able to convert all that great information into effective training programs for their volunteer catechists. In other words, the manuals proved largely unworkable for their intended purposes. Clearly, we had a problem.

When we replaced the Sharing Program with Horizons, we experimented with a new approach to materials for the program coordinator. The response was so positive that we have employed the same approach with the revised Discovering Program.

What You Will Find Here

Our primary concern in developing the Discovering Program coordinator’s resources was to offer to program leaders material that met two criteria: (1) It had to minimize the time and effort required of already overworked program coordinators. And (2) it had to include a delivery system that made the training of volunteers as simple, reasonable, and attractive as possible. We rather quickly settled on an approach that

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met both criteria—video-based training resources. That is, as the *central* component of the resources, we created high-quality, professionally produced videos both for introducing and explaining the program to the coordinator and for training volunteer teachers. Companion print pieces—this manual as well as the training manual that accompanies the teacher’s video—were designed as *supplemental* to the videos. To that end, we presumed that coordinators and teachers would view the videos and perhaps discuss them with others *before* reading the manuals. We included in the print pieces *only* information that was truly relevant to the expected concerns of coordinators and teachers, and we presented that information in the most concise, accessible way possible. Our goal: To create training resources that were so effective and easy to use that people couldn’t resist using them! We think we have accomplished that goal.

Part 1: The Discovering Video Training Resources

The first part of this coordinator’s manual consists of outlines of the video training resources—*A Video Orientation for the Program Coordinator* and *A Video Workshop for Teachers*. It also includes plenty of space for note taking. We encourage you to first watch the videos from start to finish *without* attempting to take extensive notes. This will acquaint you with the philosophy and structure of the program, its major themes, the multiple scheduling options it affords, hints on recruiting and training volunteer teachers, and much more.

We suggest that then in subsequent viewings, you use the first part of this manual to record the particular implications of the video content for *your* parish and *your* program. Questions and space for notes are incorporated into the video outlines to help you. You may certainly share or discuss these questions and your notes with others, but they do not presume any group interaction or dialog.

Perhaps you will even wish to view the videos with other leaders in the parish or with coordinators of neighboring parishes who have also adopted Discovering. If such collaboration is possible, consider ways in which you might work together in guiding your respective programs. For instance, teacher training can be done cooperatively. Or certain dimensions of the program itself—especially various youth ministry efforts designed to complement the course material—might be handled as interparish events.

Finally, take full advantage of one of the great benefits of video—the ability to stop and start, to rewind and review as often as needed to fully digest the content and its implications for you as a program coordinator.

Part 2: Helpful Resources for the Program Coordinator

The second part of the coordinator’s manual is a kind of mini-encyclopedia or, if you will, toolbox of helpful resources on a wide variety of issues and concerns confronting the coordinator of a junior high parish religion program. It includes infor-

mation on managing the program, determining a schedule, and recruiting and training teachers. These are key elements of program coordination identified and discussed in *A Video Orientation for the Program Coordinator*. Part 2 also contains sections on active learning and adolescent development. These catechetical issues are touched on but not developed in the videos. Additionally, part 2 contains material on Discovering teacher training resources and on Discovering and its connections to total youth ministry. In choosing what to include, we tried to be both thorough yet reasonable, and inclusive yet selective.

Following part 2 is an appendix and then an annotated bibliography. In the appendix you will find a complete listing of the course goals and session objectives for every Discovering course. This appendix allows you to quickly identify the content for each course. It can help you to become familiar with the overall Discovering curriculum and to select courses for your parish program.

How you use the material in and following part 2 depends in large part on your program format as well as your personal experience and training. An inexperienced program coordinator would benefit from a thorough study of that material, particularly sections 3 to 6, which deal directly with the primary tasks of a coordinator. A more experienced program coordinator will probably use part 2 as a helpful reference work, looking to it for brief summaries on common issues confronted by program leaders. Again, our goal is to provide only the most helpful information and to present it in a way that is easily accessible for even the busiest program leaders.

The Right to Duplicate Material

Here is a bonus: For users of the Discovering Program, permission is granted to reproduce any of the material in this manual *for the purposes of promoting the program or training leaders for it*. We encourage you to take full advantage of this feature, particularly to inform parish leaders, volunteers, and parents regarding various features of the program. Note, however, that duplication of the material for purposes other than those stated requires written permission from Saint Mary's Press.

Let Us Know What You Think

The development of video-based training resources for Discovering and Horizons coordinators is, candidly, still an experiment on our part. Though we believe that the videos we have produced are loaded with solid information effectively presented, we acknowledge that we are relative novices in the development of training videos. And as noted, the coordinator's manual and teacher's training manual, in both their content and their structure, are also experimental. So we would appreciate your feedback.

Feel free to respond to us at Saint Mary's Press. Write to Editors, Discovering Program, Saint Mary's Press, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320. Or call 800-533-8095, or fax 507-457-7990. We want to hear what you think of our new

approach to training resources for program leaders, especially after you have had a chance to use them with volunteer teachers. We pledge that we will take your suggestions seriously.

God's blessings on you and your ministry.

INTRODUCTION





PART 1

***The Discovering
Video Training
Resources***

A Viewer's Guide to A Video Orientation for the Program Coordinator

SECTION

1



The content of the 35-minute video for the program coordinator is outlined below. The outline includes approximate times, rounded to the nearest half minute, at which major elements appear in the tape. These are offered to help you understand the relative weight given each element as well as to help you locate certain content. They will be most accurate if you cue the tape to the beginning of the program, set your VCR timer or counter to zero, and then begin the tape. Note, however, that VCR timers and counters are not standardized, and your videotape player might indicate different times than those listed here.

The outline also includes questions for your reflection and space for you to write notes. If you are following the outline as you view the tape, you may want to pause the video while you reflect on the questions or take notes.

Introductory Comments (0:00–3:00)

- ◆ a brief tour of the video orientation
- ◆ an explanation of the coordinator's manual

A Little History (3:00–8:00)

This segment describes the characteristics of the original Discovering Program that set it apart from conventional junior programs available at the time it was developed. If you are familiar with the original program, note in the space provided below the importance of each point to your own junior high programming. Also note for each point your hopes and expectations for the revised program.

- ◆ incorporated sixth graders within the scope of junior high programming

- ◆ offered a variety of courses in a “mix-and-match” minicourse format rather than in semester-long courses

◆ The student booklets were far superior to conventional textbooks.

◆ The director's manual was the best available.

**A Viewer's
Guide to
*A Video Orientation
for the Program
Coordinator***

Despite the glowing evaluations of the original program, reviewers identified five significant changes or improvements they hoped to see in the revised Discovering:

- ◆ Thoroughly update the design of the student booklets.
- ◆ Integrate the student booklets into the teaching guides to eliminate the need for multiple teacher resources.
- ◆ Increase the amount and depth of theological content in all courses, including those on relatively secular topics.
- ◆ Provide greater direction on integrating Discovering into a total youth ministry program.
- ◆ Simplify the training resources for both the program coordinator and the teachers.

SECTION

1



The Revised Discovering (15:00–22:00)

This segment describes how the revised program responds to the requests of those who reviewed the original program. The video includes descriptions and visual references to the revised material. You may find it helpful to pause the video occasionally and take notes in the spaces provided.

- ◆ The student booklets have been thoroughly redesigned, with a more sophisticated look responsive to today's young adolescents.

- ◆ A copy of each booklet is now bound into the back of its teaching guide.

- ◆ The religious content of all courses has been expanded.

- ◆ A new set of resources has been created to help integrate Discovering into a holistic program of youth ministry.

- ◆ Video-based training resources help the coordinator more readily understand the program, recruit volunteer teachers, and train them to teach the courses effectively.

Getting Started (22:00–34:00)

The final major segment of the video orientation covers three elements of effective program coordination. The coordinator must (1) determine a schedule for the program, (2) recruit and train volunteer teachers, and (3) manage the program once it is under way. The following outline indicates the approximate times on the tape at which these elements are discussed.

Because of the richness and importance of the material in this video segment, plenty of space is provided for notes and reflections on each element. You may find it particularly helpful to stop the tape after each element and take a few minutes to jot down your reactions. Note especially questions that the material evokes that will require you to do some follow-up work, such as reflecting on the related material in part 2 of this manual.

**A Viewer's
Guide to *A Video
Orientation for
the Program
Coordinator***

Determine a Schedule (23:30–29:30)

Various scheduling formats are described:

◆ a traditional academic-year model

◆ an elective model

◆ a summer model

◆ a retreat model

Recruit and Train Teachers (29:30–31:30)

◆ an overview of the teacher training video

◆ a description of the teacher's training manual

SECTION

1**Manage the Program (31:30-34:00)**

A simple model of program management is presented. It involves three steps that recur and deepen:

◆ 1. implementation

◆ 2. evaluation

◆ 3. revision

Closing Comments (34:00-35:00)

The Program Coordinator's Guide to *A Video Workshop for Teachers*

SECTION

2



This guide is designed to help you review *A Video Workshop for Teachers* and begin to relate its content to your parish setting. The major segments of the video are outlined, with space provided for notes. Reflection questions are included to help you connect the content to your situation. Also, see section 6, “Practical Strategies for Recruiting, Training, and Supporting Teachers,” in part 2 of this manual, for ideas on how to use *A Video Workshop for Teachers* for recruiting and training.

The outline of the 74-minute teacher’s video includes approximate times, rounded to the nearest half minute, at which major elements appear in the tape. These are offered to help you plan your use of the video in recruiting and training volunteer teachers. Note, however, that VCR timers and counters are not standardized, and your videotape player might indicate different times than those listed here.

Introductory Comments (0:00–7:30)

- ◆ a brief tour of the video workshop
- ◆ four presumptions about the people viewing the tape:
 - They are novice teachers.
 - They are guided by a program coordinator.
 - They know which courses they are teaching.
 - They understand that the video focuses on the ideal approach to teaching a course.
- ◆ a description of the teacher’s training manual

For reflection

Are the four presumptions about teachers who will be using this video true for your teachers? Note how these presumptions will encourage or discourage prospective volunteer teachers.

Consider how the teacher’s training manual can be used with your teachers. Make a list of any additional resources you might want to include in the teachers’ binders.

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2



An Overview of Discovering (7:30–30:30)

- ◆ an explanation of the structure of the program
- ◆ a review of minicourse themes

For reflection

Think over how you will convey to your teachers the selection and sequence of courses. Will they be involved in choosing courses to teach?

The Discovering Approach (10:30–18:30)

- ◆ insights into the beliefs and principles that guided the development of the program:
 - Young people care about faith and religion.
 - The Gospel responds to their deepest hungers.
 - Good programs can reverse negative attitudes.
 - We must teach the right things in the right way at the right time.
 - Active learning works best.
 - Many adults have the needed skills.

For reflection

Reflect on how your teachers will react to the six beliefs that guided the development of Discovering. Will they be excited or perhaps intimidated by the active learning approach? Will you need to spend time discussing the beliefs with them?

Describe any ideas you have on how to use these foundational beliefs to catch the interest of prospective new teachers.

A Tour of a Typical Course (18:30–30:30)

- ◆ a view of the structure of each course
- ◆ a description of the course introduction and session plans
- ◆ an invitation to pause the tape and review a variety of courses and session plans

For reflection

What aspects of the teaching guides do you want to emphasize with your teachers?

**The Program
Coordinator's
Guide to
A Video Workshop
for Teachers**

Preparing to Teach (30:30–36:30)

- ◆ practical suggestions on how to prepare to teach a course

For reflection

Note anything you want to emphasize, in your teacher training, about one or more of the steps for preparation.

Do you intend to have teachers work as teams? If so, how will that affect their preparation?

Guiding the Sessions (36:30–73:00)

This part of the video offers practical guidance on ten tasks faced by the teacher. It suggests practical strategies for each of the ten tasks. Use the space after each brief summary below to note your reactions.

Selecting your learning space (37:30–39:30). Where not to teach

Preparing the learning space (39:30–43:00). What materials can be used to create a good environment; how to create an effective learning environment

SECTION

2



Creating a welcoming environment (43:00–45:00). How to start sessions on the right note; how active learning contributes to a welcoming environment

Understanding active learning (45:00–48:00). Basic theory and application of active learning

Guiding group activities (48:00–52:00). Ten hints on guiding the activities found in the sessions

Leading discussions (52:00–56:00). Basic principles of good discussion; practical suggestions on facilitating effective discussions

Delivering effective presentations (56:00–62:00). The nature of presentations in Discovering; five practical hints on preparing for and delivering presentations

**The Program
Coordinator's
Guide to
*A Video Workshop
for Teachers***

Leading prayer (62:00–70:00). Application of earlier information on leading prayer; ten hints for leading prayer effectively

Incorporating optional strategies (70:00–71:00). How to adjust primary session strategies, make connections with the families of participants, and include optional journal writing

Evaluating the experience (71:00–73:00). The importance of evaluation; a description of tools in the program designed for teacher evaluation

SECTION

2

**For reflection**

What other tasks specific to your setting would you also cover in preparing your teachers? Make a note of any other written material on these tasks you might include in the teachers' binders.

Closing Comments (73:00-74:00)**For reflection**

Do you have an immediate sense of how you wish to use this video?

What is the next thing you need to do to make effective use of this video?



PART 2

***Helpful
Resources
for the
Program
Coordinator***

SECTION
5

Fig. 2. The Traditional Academic-Year Model

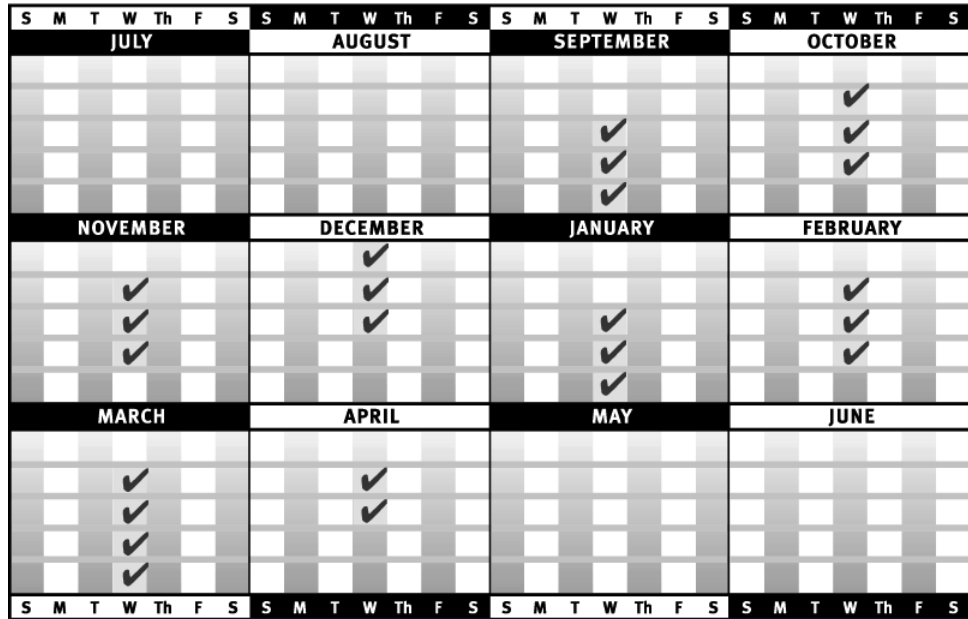


Fig. 3. The Elective Model

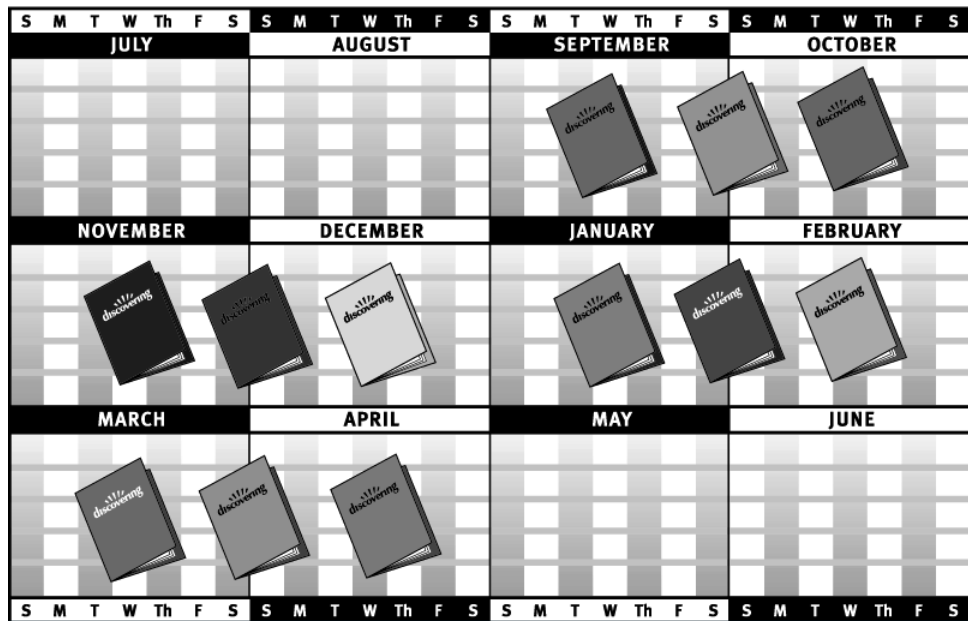
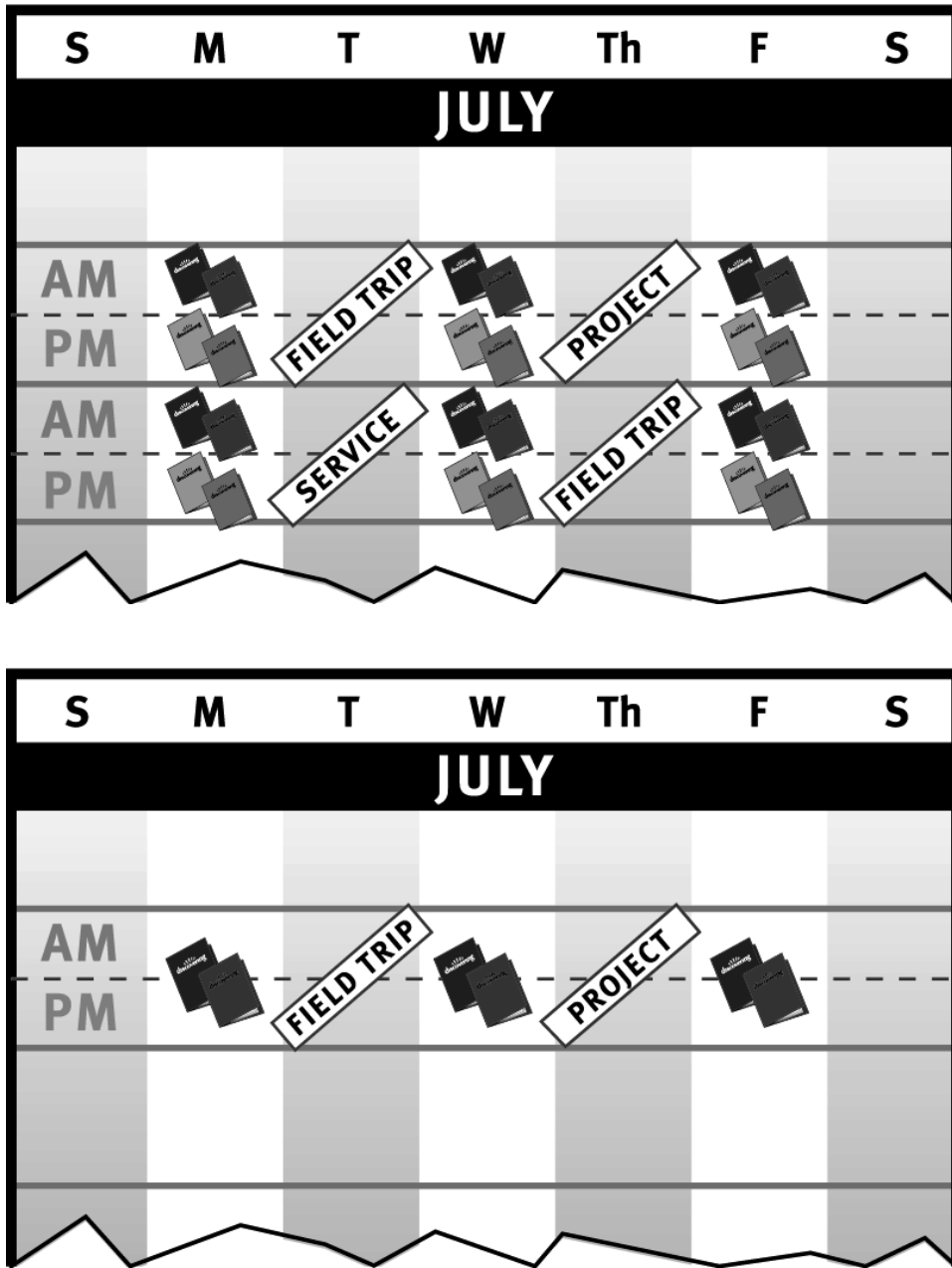


Fig. 4. The Summer Program Model



Program Schedule Options

SECTION
5

Fig. 5. The Retreat Model

