

NAECED Survey Question (108 responses)

Can you suggest specific steps that the Episcopal Church or your congregation might take to make Christian education more effective?

Parish Level Education (37 responses)

- Congregation: Hold education for all ages at the same time (between services)
- Spend more time on adult education
- Scheduling
- Include formational activities and programs in strategic planning.
- Find relevant curriculum, involve all in liturgy
- Any stewardship efforts in the church should include Christian Educators as well as other staff persons. So much of what we do is recruit teachers to offer exciting materials each Sunday, but only for those who show up. Stewardship teaching should emphasize the stewardship of time. If stewardship efforts reached the one-hour-a-week Christians effectively, they would know that showing up as much as possible to worship and Christian formation and other offerings is the most important thing we do as a church. If we are effective in getting people to come, the money will follow.
- Bore no more.
- Have something for different types of learners.
- To get the young married-with-children professionals engaged in their own formation. They would be less likely to assign the task of Spiritual Formation to church school teachers. They would also feel more confident taking an active part in the formation of others.
- In the parish - give it more time. Families will not commit to more than about 45 minutes, no matter how good the program is.
- Get ideas from children afford them opportunity to lead and help each other and don't follow the public ed assembly line model
- Clergy have to get on board and promote this stuff! We can design all the creative programs in the world and, unless there's a voice in the pulpit, no one comes.
- Collaborative endeavors across groups involved in the formation process
- Not take Education/formation time out of worship time
- Regular adult education & (not part of my job description) formation
- Reach out into the local community and more actively attract new members both to participate in education and also to volunteer
- Within my parish, I am trying to help families discern the priorities of their lives. What is more important - soccer or Christian Education? Unfortunately too many are opting for the first...
- To have open and honest discussions as to where the church is presently. There is this overwhelming feeling that we have to have certain programs, yet there are no volunteers or children to participate in them.
- Taking a realistic look as to where we are now and not where we should be or dream of is extremely important.
- Do we have statistics on the positive results of regular church attendance?

- Think inter-generationally
- We have just called together a Task Force for long range goals and communication.
- We need to get our congregation motivated, excited, and interested in all areas of Christian Education. They pertain to the development of all Christians.
- My individual congregation is very supportive of all we can do for Christian Formation for any age.
- In our congregation we have recently established a Children's Ministry Team to coordinate children's programming.
- Creating and/or fostering a sense of connection to the community at large by offering classes or workshops in the arts (my background) such as writing and theatre, which would build community and offer a bridge for newcomers into the life of the church.
- Clergy might better support (with funds and verbal announcements) formation/ education offerings and emphasize that consistent attendance, particularly in the case of children, is essential for formation.
- Clearly defined "Goal" of Sunday School & Christian Ed. in congregation.
- I believe that the place of children's ministry needs to be elevated; within my own church, it seems that the more the adults can do to get away from the kids, the better. The children need to be a part of the church, so that the adults are drawn to the ministry; as it is, they are the "other", and people who probably have great gifts to share with the children don't want to volunteer to teach, lead chapel services, etc.
- More support of Christian Ed. by Rector and Vestry
- Have a service geared to children elementary - middle school
- Have church school year round
- We are finally forming an adult education committee to plan an organized program here at this church, rather than a smattering of events with now connection to each other.
- We are working on a strategic plan and ministry structure. I prefer collaborative ministry, which is a challenge.
- Educate the adults that this is a journey and you grow spiritually as you lead
- Offer more adult formation programs designed to appeal to the specific needs of young parents.
- Encourage families to make Christian education a life-style habit
- *(See also Ministry areas)*

Professional Issues (27 responses)

- Re-hire a separate youth minister. Ours left and one person (me) simply can't be in all the places needed.
- Salary guidelines for lay professionals
- Certification for lay professionals
- Support for diocesan CE positions
- Raising salaries for professional Christian formation leaders (I know, I know, easier said than done.)
- To keep qualified professionals in the field
- Continue consciousness-raising in the area of budget requirements for lay salaries & benefits.
- Make having paid professional diocesan Christian Ed staff a high budget priority throughout the church.

- Visibility and the staffing to support that
- Treat lay staff as you would clergy, to attract and retain well-qualified educators.
- Continue to support and finance the ministries of CF diocesan committees in working with congregations; adequate financial support for individuals employed by congregations and dioceses as CF directors/administrators
- Better pay for lay employees. Clergy are well paid, but not lay people.
- Professional recognition and compensation equal to that offered to clergy
- A standard set by the diocese for salary and benefits for lay professionals working in education in the diocese. (Like the one for clergy)
- Just making people aware of how valuable our (the educator's) continuing education is to not only our youth and children but to the church as a whole. We need to be educated and be creative and up to date to get the attention of our children and youth and to keep them coming. But as a youth leader I need the tools of the trade to make it happen and sometimes that costs money!
- Full support of Christian Formation people instead of lip service; professional level; salaries and benefits commensurate with ed and experience....
- Treat it as professional
- I believe that it will take an enormous shift in attitudes at all levels of the church for Christian education to be recognized as the MINISTRY that it is. We are shaping souls, forming families, making disciples...there is no more important work than this, and it needs to be recognized and commended and, frankly, compensated as such. Specifically, minimum standards for the education, training (including continuing ed), and compensation of lay employees in the field of Christian Education need to be put in place and enforced throughout the church.
- Continue to stress the importance of well-trained administrators of Christian education in the Christian Ed field (ie not just general seminary with no CE).
- Develop better programs aimed at wellness for lay Christian educators, ie more CREDO for lay professionals, Alban conferences related to organizational issues involved in managing rectors, committees, teachers, parents, etc.; help figure out the role of and better guidelines for paid lay Christian educators who aren't and shouldn't (in most cases) be members of the parish they serve. By this I mean: vestry attendance? Participation in mutual ministry review? Participation in strategic planning for church? Should they or shouldn't they? How do Christian ed directors find priests to serve as their pastoral care when they can't attend home parishes often enough to get to know the priest, etc.
- Create a coordinator position for the WNY Diocese
- Pay the educators in this Diocese
- It would be wonderful to have each clergy person value the work done by the Christian Educators by considering them as full members of the congregational staff and treated thusly whether or not they were compensated financially. Have that person listed every time other clergy from that congregation is listed. i.e.: recognition ... not lip service and a potted plant.
- Full time paid person with realistic salary; Clergy support; paid continuing education; benefits
- Making sure lay employees and volunteers in congregations are supported philosophically and financially for getting to at least one major conference or seminar a year.
- Staff person at Diocesan level

- List them as Staff, pay them and acknowledge that they are as necessary as the secretary and organist to the growth of a church parish.
- *See also Funding*

Education as Mission Priority (23 responses)

- Encouraging ministry and refusing to participate in the polarizing that is turning people off. It wouldn't hurt to have Christian Formation a higher budget priority!
- Church as a whole needs to stress Adult Ed and Family Ministry.
- Emphasize ongoing, lifelong Christian formation as a norm for Episcopalians, not an optional "enrichment."
- We need to communicate to our parishes that Christian education is a life time, on-going process for all ages and stages of life.
- Clergy need to know now important Christian Education is in the life of the parish.
- Help! For many of our parents, CE does not seem to be valued. If a soccer game is scheduled on Sunday morning that comes first. What can we do?
- Find a way to educate the church -- those in the pew -- the importance of Christian Formation and making it a priority in their lives -- right up there with soccer and sleep!!
- Our parish does a wonderful job w/Christian ed for infants through adulthood. I think that the Episcopal Church needs to take a hard look at expectations for Christian Ed in the church. It will never be taken seriously if it coincides with church services and if the Christian Education professionals are expected to "volunteer" or be paid less than adequate wages.
- Set Christian education as a priority in the national church - seen with worship at its center, Christian education is the premier goal of the church.
- Value the ministry by paying fairly, providing resources, preaching to the importance of living into the Baptismal Covenant and Great Commission
- Value it!
- Christian Education for children and adults seems to be taking a back seat to education for youth. We are fortunate to have the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program in place for our children - this takes the education of children seriously.
- For the Church as a whole - somehow work to inform all members of the importance of life long formation.
- There is no easy solution to helping adults see that CE does not stop with confirmation, that formation is life-long. That is the message we need to get out to all.
- Assist others in owning that it is a lifelong process
- Making more of a priority within the parish
- I think more emphasis on the Christian education of those just beginning their formation journey. Ways to "bring them into this journey" that are not intimidating to them. Then creating avenues to strengthen this formation experience.
- Name it as high priority then follow through with funding, collaboration and communication.
- Hold it up as important. Talk about it like it matters.
- An overall plan - like a scope and sequence - for Christian Education / Faith Formation in the church and diocese.
- To better understand the importance
- A substantial statement from ++Katharine and the HoB affirming their belief that learning is good for us all and that they are not threatened by an informed laity.

- Lift up formation for all ages as the work of the whole community. Better Bible education and sacramental education for all, in part to demystify teaching.
- *See also Education and Leadership Role of the Ordained & Seminaries*

Resource Development (13 responses)
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- One of the biggest needs I have is for easily accessible and affordable resources for parents. That is both to provide parents with the means to support the spiritual development of their children and also just to persuade parents as to the importance of this part of their child's nurture. I am one person, though, in a congregation serving not only all of our children from birth to age 18 but also their parents. I have to carefully balance my time so materials will need to be very user friendly.
- Release more denominational programming for adults like: the Diocese of Texas' *Discovery Series, Via Media* and an Episcopal version of something like the *Living the Questions* DVDs.
- It would be great to have all the amazing information that I have learned on NAECED available to the masses. It amazes people to find out how much information I have acquired from all the amazing people on that listserv
- Publish a variety of learning possibilities that include video, reading, active participation. I am able to buy great things from non-Episcopal publishers. Where are the Episcopal writers like Madeline L'Engle? What my congregants read are books with horrid English, bad writing, and fluffy foundations. Let's get some educated writers for young people.
- More web resources for families
- Better use of electronic communications.
- Better information about resources.
- Again, Communication, Teamwork, Organization
- Parents training workshop . . . give them tools to bring Faith training to the families
- Those "I wonder" questions. Those are what develop in our children an ability to think theologically and give them an opportunity to form a personal lifelong relationship with God. Once again, developing programs that recognize how children learn and retain information. An awareness of the learning needs of today's children: experiential, creative, use of current technology, and provides the learning environments to support that formation. I truly feel that we need to provide those experiences instead of the way some of what some of our curriculums offer children. Just think of having the some thing done each week and taught in the same way each Sunday for 6 years of your life--would get kinda boring. Kids today need more than that.
- Better curriculum for Intermediates (gr. 4-6)
- We could really use more resources for engaging children in worship more. We heavily use Gretchen Wolff Pritchard's materials as well as *Awake My Soul* and the resources, which arose afterwards from that material. I would love to see that work continue... to be able to enrich worship with child friendly language and story and prayer but to do so in a way that engages everyone and stays faithful to our Episcopal/ Anglican tradition too.
- Develop liturgies for youth.

Professional Development (Training & Communication) (10 responses)

- More resources for teachers to help them move from doing volunteer work to having a vocation.
- Have ways for educators to work/collaborate with clergy so we can better find common ground. When there are "clergy days" for rest & renewal... could we find ways occasionally for educators to be involved too?
- More readily available (i.e. locally, not having to fly to the coast) inexpensive to free training for leaders of adult formation so members of the congregation can see that lay leaders can teach just as well (or even better) than ordained leaders!!!
- Help churches provide quality training (such as the Godly Play Teacher Accreditation training) to more people; gather some experienced and creative CE people from around the country to work on creating a path of programs for children youth and adults
- Access to web resources and guidance in how to use them, made available in a distance-learning format, or workshops in my part of the diocese.
- Diocesan or state wide conferences – smaller scale meetings
- Share resources and ideas with other educators. What ideas, topics, curriculum, etc. have they found success or problems with? Need more education to know what is available to us.
- We need a better communication system to let people know what is coming up and how they can participate.
- Have more Christian Education degree opportunities
- Offer more events and support on the West Coast.
- *See also Funding*

Education and Leadership Role of the Ordained & Seminaries (9 responses)

- Episcopal Church: Requiring all seminarians to take a Christian education / faith development course that deals with practical implications for parish ministry; have a question on the GOEs regarding children, family and/or youth ministry
- Education/formation needs to be treated as a valuable and vital part of the church program, rather than as something extra that is offered. One specific step to accomplish this is to require all clergy to have significant course work in CE in seminary, so that they are aware of it's value to the future of the church, and are also knowledgeable of what is needed to make a CE program work within a church, no matter how big or small.
- Help clergy take seriously their ordination vows of continued study
- Rectors to uphold the role of Formation ministry in the lives of our members.
- From the bishops on down through the clergy we need visible and vocal support that makes clear that Christians are formed in community and that education is one critical piece of that process.
- The Episcopal Church and clergy must believe in the importance of CE and not just give it lip service. I am tired of hearing about its importance and yet it seems to be the first line item or staff position cut. How to fix this? The first and most important step of effectiveness would be at seminaries. The church also needs to acknowledge a cultural shift took place a while ago and spend time visioning its impact and what happens with CE. How do we reach all age ranges?
- Having clergy communication
- Help the PB, Bishops, those in seminaries (teachers and students), and rectors to appreciate the great importance of Christian formation/education and encourage their strong and active

support.

- Commitment and involvement of the clergy in a congregation and the bishop in a diocese is essential.

Ministry Areas (8 responses)

- More emphasis on young adults
- Need to help make the Sunday-Monday connection, take seriously what most Anglicans do from 9-5 on week days and on weekends and help them to reflect theologically and engagement in discernment about their daily life ministries; workplace visits
- Several colleagues and I are on a CE Task Force and are trying to help anyone we can weather our current storm. We try to work one-on-one and reach out to the fringes.
- Each parish must offer youth education, no matter how small!
- Do educating on parents as the primary religious educators and that Sunday school doesn't always have to be fun and entertaining but it is still important to attend.
- Emphasize the need and importance of adult education. Not place all the resources in Children's Christian Ed.
- I believe that we have lost touch with family ministry. It would be helpful for us to reach into the families and educate them of their responsibilities. Until the families understand their role we want be able to grow.
- Provide boiler plate and sophisticated marketing campaigns to welcome families in our neighborhood

Funding (7 responses)

- More funding
- Budget resources to support the ministry
- More money ear-marked for conferences - especially from the diocese to provincial meetings
- We need to stop passing education resolutions at General Convention that don't have funding!
- Allocate money and hire staff to support the ministries.
- Budget and training
- Funding for continuing ed for lay leaders

Provincial & Church-wide Leadership (4 responses)

- To have a more personable response from the network of Provincial leaders and National church leaders.
- Our experience with the National Church was very negative concerning the EMX with Youth in conjunction with Passport Camps. Passport has been delightful and in fact our youth director, Sonyia Elder, is on the National Board for Passport Camps.
- Our diocese is making a comeback in supporting the CE Network after many years of chaos.
- Change the hours Episcopal Church Center to 10 - 3 so that open for west coast work day too.

Miscellaneous (3 responses)

- Thanks for all your great work!

- Medical coverage was offered to me, but I am already covered under my husband's plan.
- No