Upside Down: (example)
Inviting Parent Buy-In That Leads to Ownership

Making Family Faith Formation Something Parents Actually Want to Attend

Step 1: Flip it Upside Down - How to Make It Miserable

If your goal were to make parents hate coming to family faith formation, what would you do?

Brainstorm: Write as many ideas as possible. These can be things you've seen, things you've done, or just things you think might make parents miserable.

The Worst Thing We Could Do	Why This Would Frustrate Parents
Start at 8 am or 8 pm	*Would interfere with homework and sleep schedules*
Use 30+ minute PowerPoints	*Would bore everyone out of their minds*
Make parents take a quiz	*Makes parents feel uncomfortable*
Provide no coffee or snacks.	*Doesn't make them feel at home*
Require 25 meetings each year	*Doesn't respect families' time*

Step 2: Flip It Right-Side Up — How to Make It Wonderful

Now turn those same ideas upside down. What's the opposite of that miserable experience?

Miserable Idea	What's the Opposite?	What Would This Look Like?
eg. Start at 8pm on a school night	*Pick a family-friendly time*	*Sunday afternoon after Mass; or midweek dinner-hour gathering*
eg. Use 30+ Minute PowerPoints	*Keep things short and interactive*	*15 minute presentation, then discussion*
No coffee	*Hospitality that delights*	*Coffee bar, snacks, warm welcome team*

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Upside Down:
Inviting Parent Buy-In That Leads to Ownership

Making Family Faith Formation Something Parents Actually Want to Attend

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If your goal were to make parents hate coming to family faith formation, what would you do?

Brainstorm: Write as many ideas as possible. These can be things you've seen, things you've done, or just things you think might make parents miserable.

1. (Examples: Start at 8:00 p.m. on a school night. Give long presentations/ PowerPoints. Make parents take a quiz. Provide no coffee or snacks. Require 25 meetings each year.)

The Worst Thing We Could Do	Why This Would Frustrate Parents

Step 2: Flip It Right-Side Up — How to Make It Wonderful

Now turn those same ideas upside down. What's the opposite of that miserable experience?

Miserable Idea	What's the Opposite?	What Would This Look Like?

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Upside Down: (Design)
Inviting Parent Buy-In That Leads To Ownership

Step 4: Design Elements of a Delightful Experience

Area of Focus	Ideas for Parent Buy-In
Theme / Topic How do we present faith themes in a way that feels relevant to family life?	
Setting & Time Does this work for busy families with kids of different ages?	
Welcome / Hospitality How can we anticipate families' needs in a way that helps them feel "seen?"	
Shared Parent-Child Experience How can we help parents share meaningful and enjoyable time with their kids?	
Takeaway / Next Step How do we make it easy for families to keep growing after this session?	

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Family Faith Formation Pantry List (example)

Instructions: Take a few moments to do a 'pantry audit' by placing all of the various elements of your hosted gatherings at your parish onto one or more of the following shelves: **Formal Catechesis, Community Building, Prayer/Liturgy, and Meaningful Service**. Pick the shelf that aligns most closely with the intended purpose of the gathering, but recognize some elements may be placed on multiple shelves.

Element / Activity / Ingredient	Formal Catechesis	Community Building	Prayer/ Liturgy	Meaningful Service
Icebreaker / Whole family game		✓		
Short adult-led lesson	✓			
Reflection Questions	✓		✓	

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Family Faith Formation Pantry List

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Element / Activity / Ingredient	Formal Catechesis	Community Building	Prayer/ Liturgy	Meaningful Service

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Family Faith Formation Offering Planning Sheet

Instructions: Use this Family Faith Formation Offering Planning Sheet to help you plan a delicious offering for your families.

1. Write the name of the offering, a planned or tentative date, and the primary theme or goal of the offering
2. Draw from the ingredients on your Family Faith Formation Pantry List, ensuring a balanced mix of elements from across the four aspects of family faith formation: **Formal Catechesis, Community Building, Prayer, and Meaningful Service**
3. Review this plan with your volunteers or offering workers to gather feedback and build consensus.

Offering		**Date**	
Theme / Goal			

Place the major elements (ingredients) of your offering into the quadrants below.

Formal Catechesis	Community Building
Prayer / Liturgy	Meaningful Service

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Family Faith Formation Offering Flow Planning Sheet (example)

Instructions: Use this worksheet to help you plan the flow and logistics for a Family Faith Formation offering.

Offering	Family Faith Formation, night 2	**Date**	Sunday, 4-5:30
Theme / Goal	help families understand and experience God's love through proclamation of and encounter with Kerygma		

Tips:

1. The flow of the offering and the amount of time spent on each segment matters
2. **Ask**: In what order will these segments come? How much time will be intentionally allotted for each component/ dimension?
3. Prayer and connection might seem like "wasted time," but they are absolutely foundational to any fruitful ministry.
4. Draw from the ingredients on your Family Faith Formation Pantry List, ensuring a balanced mix of elements from across the four aspects of family faith formation: (📚) Formal Catechesis, (👥) Community Building, (🙏) Prayer/Liturgy, and (🌱) Meaningful Service

Activity	Duration	📚	👥	🙏	🌱
mingling and snacks	25 minutes		✓		✓
welcome, overview, opening prayer	5 minutes			✓	
object lesson, cup kerygma	15 minutes	✓			
facilitated peer small groups for discussion	35 minutes	✓	✓		✓
re-group for prayer, light candles to connect Kerygma to Baptism, 3 minute testimony	10 minutes	✓	✓	✓	✓
mingling, clean up	15 minutes		✓		✓

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Family Faith Formation Offering Flow Planning Sheet

Instructions: Use this Family Faith Formation Offering Planning Sheet to help you plan the flow and logistics for an offering.

Offering		**Date**	
Theme / Goal			

Tips:

1. The flow of the offering and the amount of time spent on each segment matters
2. **Ask**: In what order will these segments come? How much time will be intentionally allotted for each component/ dimension?
3. Prayer and connection might seem like "wasted time," but they are absolutely foundational to any fruitful ministry.
4. Draw from the ingredients on your Family Faith Formation Pantry List, ensuring a balanced mix of elements from across the four aspects of family faith formation: (📚) Formal Catechesis, (👥) Community Building, (🙏) Prayer/Liturgy, and (🌱) Meaningful Service

Activity	Duration	📚	👥	🙏	🌱

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Sacramental Prep Pantry List

Instructions: Take a few moments to do a 'pantry audit' by placing all of the various elements of your hosted gatherings at your parish onto one or more of the following shelves: **Formal Catechesis, Community Building, Prayer/Liturgy, and Meaningful Service**. Pick the shelf that aligns most closely with the intended purpose of the gathering, but recognize some elements may be placed on multiple shelves.

Element / Activity / Ingredient	Formal Catechesis	Community Building	Prayer/ Liturgy	Meaningful Service

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Sacramental Prep Offering Planning Sheet

Instructions: Use this Planning Sheet to help you plan a delicious and balanced offering for your families.

1. Write the name of the offering, a planned or tentative date, and the primary theme or goal of the offering
2. Draw from the ingredients on your Pantry List, ensuring a balanced mix of elements from: **Formal Catechesis, Community Building, Prayer, and Meaningful Service**
3. Make sure there are meaningful opportunities for children/ youth to do something with their parents, and opportunities for children/ youth and parents to be with their peers.
4. Review this plan with your volunteers or offering workers to gather feedback and build consensus.

Offering		**Date**	
Theme / Goal			

Place the major elements (ingredients) of your offering into the quadrants below.

Formal Catechesis	Community Building
Prayer / Liturgy	Meaningful Service

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Sacramental Prep Offering
Flow Planning Sheet

Instructions: Use this Planning Sheet to help you plan the flow and logistics for a Sacramental Prep offering.

Offering		**Date**	
Theme / Goal			

Tips:

1. The flow of the offering and the amount of time spent on each segment matters
2. Be sure to indicate which of these elements/ activities will keep parents with their kids, and which will break them into peer groups.
3. Draw from the ingredients on your Pantry List, ensuring a balanced mix of elements from across the four dimensions: (📚) Formal Catechesis, (👥) Community Building, (🙏) Prayer/Liturgy, and (🌱) Meaningful Service
4. Review this plan with your volunteers or advisory team to gather feedback and build consensus.

Activity	Duration	📚	👥	🙏	🌱

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Family Faith Formation - Avoiding Extremes

Instructions: It's easy for programs to drift toward extremes without noticing. You might be meeting so infrequently that families never build momentum, or so often that you're burning everyone out. You might keep families together every session, or split them into peer groups every time — both miss something important.

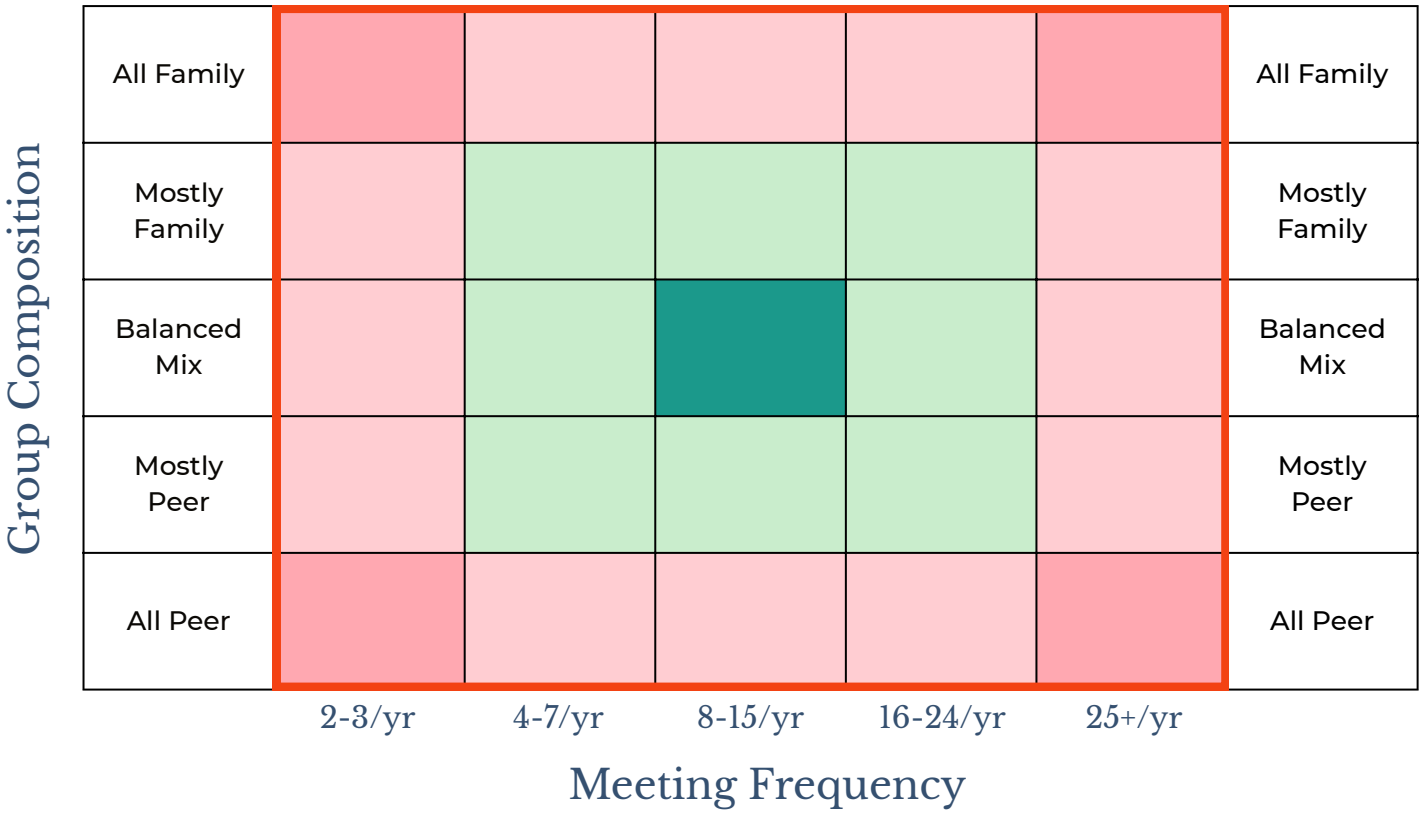
This chart helps you see where your program actually sits, identify if you're too close to an "edge," and set a realistic goal for this year. You don't have to overhaul everything at once — just one step closer to the center.

1. Put an **X** where your program is now for both parameters, the frequency of your meetings and the composition of your groups.
2. Put a ★ where you can realistically move THIS YEAR.

Program: _____

Understanding the Chart

Think of this chart as a table surface. The red edges are extremes where programs "fall off" into imbalance. The green center represents the balanced approach that bears the most fruit.



Reflection

You don't have to leap all at once. What is **one concrete step** to move toward the green?

_____

_____

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Conversion-oriented Sacramental Prep

What Actually Invites Conversion in this Sacrament, and in Preparing for it?

Sacrament I'm Focusing On: _____

Why did Jesus give this Sacrament? _____

Goal for families	How we offer this	What can this look like?
To feel seen, known, and loved	Listen and respond to families (Connect)	
To be mentored and accompanied in faith	Intentional interaction with an active disciple (Connect)	
To deepen and build Christ-centered relationships	Genuine welcome, intentional mingling, facilitated shared experiences (Connect)	
To be amazed and inspired by God's love	Stories, wonder, testimonies, imagination, beauty, engaging the senses (Captivate)	
Personal encounter with Jesus	Beautiful guided prayer time (Captivate)	
To receive bite-sized, delicious bites of truth	Incarnational kerygmatic catechesis with time to process (Catechize)	
Ongoing formation and accompaniment	Clear next steps, intentional invitation (CCCC)	

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Conversion-oriented Sacramental Prep

Sacramental Mystery Box Reflection

What You Just Experienced

In a short amount of time, using ordinary materials, you designed a moment of sacramental preparation that was:

- Personal and relational
- Sensory and embodied
- Developmentally appropriate
- Rooted in family participation
- Oriented toward encounter with Jesus Christ

This reflects a conversion-oriented approach to sacramental preparation—one that serves the person, not simply the program, and situates sacramental preparation within the wider context of Family Faith Formation.
Sacramental preparation bears fruit when it creates space for encounter and accompanies families toward a lived sacramental life.

Why This Approach Matters

Sacramental preparation is most fruitful when it is:

- **Incarnational** — God uses signs, symbols, and embodied experience
- **Relational** — trust and belonging make faith possible
- **Family-centered** — parents are primary witnesses
- **Experiential** — wonder and encounter precede explanation
- **Intentional** — small moments can lead to lasting conversion

Reflection

1. What's one insight I'm taking with me? Something I noticed about families, children or our current approach:

2. What's one concrete step I can take in the next 30-60 days?
   - ☐ Introduce one sensory or symbolic element
   - ☐ Incorporate intentional movement or church space
   - ☐ Create a shared parent–child experience
   - ☐ Facilitate encounter through guided prayer or Scripture
   - ☐ Offer a clear invitation to continued participation

My next step:

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Conversion-oriented Sacramental Prep

Sample Sacramental Prep Moments - Part 1

These examples are not scripts or curricula. They illustrate how ordinary objects, used intentionally, can open space for encounter and conversation within sacramental preparation.

1. Baptism - "Marked and Claimed"

Objects: Bowl of water and small towel
Participants: Parents and children together
Experience: Families gather around a bowl of water. Parents dip their fingers into the water and gently trace the sign of the cross on their child's forehead.
Reflection Prompt (spoken): "Before your child could choose God, God chose them. Before they could speak their faith, the Church spoke it for them."
Parents are invited to briefly share something they remember or cherish about their child's baptism day.
Formation Dimensions: Prayer / Catechesis / Community
Outcome: Children experience belonging and care. Parents are reminded of their role as primary witnesses of faith.

2. Reconciliation - "Coming Home"

Objects: Piece of aluminum foil
Participants: Parents and children together
Experience: Each person holds a flat piece of aluminum foil, representing our relationship with God and with others. The leader explains that sin does not make us bad, but it damages relationships. The leader names a few age-appropriate examples (disobeying parents or teachers, being unkind, putting ourselves first) and invites families to name others quietly. Each time an example is named, everyone folds or crumples their foil. Eventually, the foil becomes a small ball. The leader asks if anyone can make their foil smooth and new again.
Families then walk together to the confessional. Inside is a basket or container where they place the crumpled foil. As they leave, they receive a new, smooth piece of foil.
Reflection Prompt (spoken): "God gives us the Sacrament of Reconciliation to do what we cannot do for ourselves — to heal what sin has damaged and to restore our relationships."
Parents are encouraged to share how forgiveness has mattered in their own lives.
Formation Dimensions: Prayer / Catechesis / Community
Outcome: Children associate confession with mercy, healing, and welcome — not fear.

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3. Eucharist - “Recognizing Jesus”

Objects: White cloth, small chalice, small paten, paper host, small bell
Participants: Parents and children together
Experience: Families gather around a table, which serves as a symbolic altar. Together, they place the white cloth on the table and prepare the gifts of bread and wine. Each family member takes a turn making the gesture of the epiclesis — silently lowering their hands over the gifts — while another family member gently rings the bell.
A brief moment of silence follows.
Reflection Prompt (spoken): “Jesus often comes quietly. In the Eucharist, he gives himself to us and stays with us.”
Parents and children are invited to share where they notice Jesus’ presence — at Mass, at home, or in moments of love and care.
Formation Dimensions: Prayer / Catechesis / Community
Outcome: Children begin to associate the Eucharist with presence, reverence, and relationship — not just ritual

4. Confirmation - “Sealed and Sent”

Objects: Small bottle of oil
Participants: Parents and children together
Experience: Parents place their hands gently on their child’s head in silence. Then, using a small amount of oil, they trace a cross on the child’s hand. Afterward, parents gently turn the child’s hand outward, extending it slightly away from the body — a physical gesture of being sent.
Reflection Prompt (spoken): “The Holy Spirit strengthens us not to stay the same, but to be sent.”
Parents are invited to share a moment when they needed the help of the Holy Spirit — courage, wisdom, patience, or strength.
Formation Dimensions: Prayer / Catechesis / Mission
Outcome: Children understand Confirmation as strengthening and commissioning for mission, not graduation.

A Final Encouragement

These moments are simple by design. When sacramental preparation becomes more embodied, relational, and prayerful, families are more likely to move from participation to discipleship.

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